OTHER HANDS

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Editorial: back for more

Yes, we are still here! After a summer of self-imposed linguistic torture, your editor has re¬turned for a double dose of Middle-earth mad¬ness in this, our first double issue of *Other Hands*. A lot has happened since Issue 5 last April. *Amor*, the first of the new batch of Middle-earth "Realm" modules from ICE, is finally out, and the dreaded *Kin-strife* manuscript is at last com¬plete (see "Frontlines" for more details on new *MERP* releases). More importantly, though, we've got a great issue in store for you right here and now.

Chris Pheby has rejoined our ranks from *OH* 1 with a ready-to-run adventure and an article on magic use in *MERP* (co-written with *OH* new¬comer, Michael Saunders). Like our last adven¬ture in *OH* 4, Chris has chosen the War of the Ring as the setting for a harrowing encounter with one of the Ringwraiths as they begin the hunt for the Shire. His discussion of "innate magic" follows as a response to Andrew McMurry's earlier discussion of the same topic a few issues back (*OH* 3: 11-12), and succeeds in operationalizing the latter's insights into *MERP/ Rolemaster* mechanics.

This is truly a double issue, for it contains not one but *two* adventures. With the helpful collabo¬ration of a couple of friends, I've put together material for the cult of Benish Armon, expanding upon its role in the *Kin-strife* module. In addition, I include my own "sequel" to the Kin-strife, which heavily draws upon the cult article. This adventure (or, rather, campaign; for it is only presented in outline) is set in Gondor and else¬where in the T.A. 1450, and enables characters to solve the mystery of Queen Berúthiel once and for all.

Having carefully considered my own article of last issue on the origin of Ar-Pharazôn's monu¬ment in Umbar (*OH* 5: 17-19), Jason Beresford has written a counter-proposal which offers an alternative (in this case, a revisionist) view of the evidence, which will most likely be appearing in some form in the published *Umbar* Realm mod¬ule. Lastly (but certainly not leastly), Anders Blixt takes a quick stab at the logistics of Minas Tirith's defense and their impact on the problem of food supply.

Since April, we have landed ourselves a few new subscribers, and we anticipate more to come. There also exists the distinct possibility that *OH* may become available "on-line" as well as in hard-copy to those who have access to the information highway. We are currently working out the details with our publishers, and will keep our subscribers informed of any developments. We hope our readers will enjoy the "thickness" of this issue, and encourage you to help us keep the pages *Other Hands* alive with your erudition and wit.

Chris Seeman
October 10, 1994

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COMMUNICATIONS

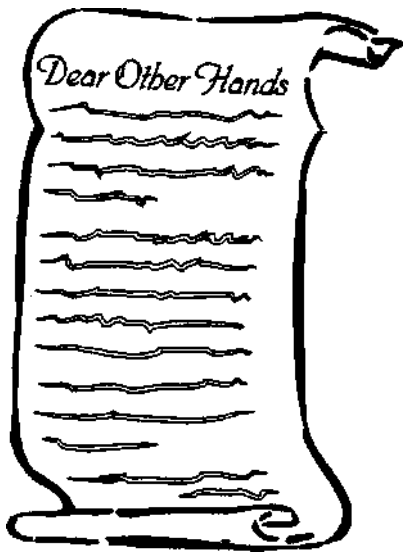
***Dear Chris and* Other Hands,**

Only recently copies of the first two issues of *Other Hands* fell into mine, and I have to say that it is just the kind of thing I felt long over¬ due. Personally, I always thought that *MERP/ Rolemaster,* while being an excellent game sys¬ tem in its own right, is not ideally suited to a world like Middle-earth, perhaps less so in its (nonexistent, as far as I'm concerned) ap¬ proach towards religion, but even more through the "abuse" of magic it calls for in what I felt was a non-high fantasy setting.

To solve the problem of "true magick" in a high realism fantasy world such as Middle-earth, for myself the logical consequence was to look for a game system with more "realism" to it, which I finally found with *Harnmaster,* leaving unsolved for the moment the issue of religion. Thus, I welcomed very much your article on religion in *OH* 2.

What ICE has been quite good at doing is, it would appear to me, the fleshing out of the various regions of Arda, and in this respect I do not share Anders Blixt's criticism (*OH* 2: 22) about a lack of Middle-earth "feel" to the ICE products set in southern Middle-earth. One can simply not expect to feel at home in Tolkien's world there, because one isn't. After all, these settings are all about being different, "exotic" if you wish to put it that way.

This is not to say that south of Umbar "any¬ thing goes," but the way Haradrim culture is described there, and the concept of Númenórean city-states surviving in the deep south as such certainly do not run contrary to the little Tolkien says about these regions. I think that is about all you can ask for and, per¬ sonally, I appreciate very much that ICE re¬ frained from the temptation simply to clone real world cultures, transplanting them to Arda. In fact I consider ICE's southern Middle-earth



game supplements a rather good example for intelligent use of real world analogies in a fan¬ tasy setting. Details of course are, like always, debatable; as for the Storm King, oh well, all those Nazgûl have to come from somewhere after all.

With this I do not intend to particularly praise the plot lines of these "southern" (or any other of ICE's) Middle-earth adven¬ tures—still far to much Orc-bashing as far as I'm concerned. That ICE can do much better than this, they sadly have shown so far only in non-Middle-earth related products, like their *Robin Hood* volume, whose "Forest of Dean" plot and places in particular could be made an excellent adventure anywhere in rural Gondor during the Kin-strife, with very little addi¬ tional effort from the gamemaster.

Thanks an awful lot for the photocopies of *Other Hands* 3 and 4....Issue 3 was the best one ever, as far as I'm concerned—every single bit of it. Of #4, I especially liked Norman Talbot's piece "Middle-earth Down Under" (5-10)— not that it particularly fit my own conception of Middle-earth. It was just so hilariously funny, and one wonders what might have become of Professor Tolkien's works had he lived in New South Wales.

The only point of severe criticism I have to make about anything in the last two issues con¬ cerns James Owen's remark that bronze was "widely used for sword blades in Roman times (*OH* 4: 20)." Well, sort of—now guess why they call it the *iron* age. Even by the time of the foundation of the city of Rome (conventionally 753 B.C.) the only bronze sword around would have been the one held by the eldest commu¬ nity member (most likely having inherited it from his great-grandfather).

All the best with the next issues.

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Dear Chris,

I'm just back from one of the silliest Tolkien Society moots I 've been to in a long time. The *Mundeli Sernieva* were going full throttle. Among other subjects discussed, how exactly do Orcs reproduce, given the lack of gooseberry bushes and/or cabbage patches under the Misty Moun¬ tains. Possibly they get delivered by pterodac¬ tyl,; but if so, they will have died out by the early Fourth Age when the winged beasts be¬ came extinct.

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FINE PRINT

Other Hands is an international gaming journal devoted to fantasy role-playing set in J.R.R. Tolkien's secondary world of Middle-earth. It is a quarterly, nonprofit publication welcoming submissions dealing with any aspect of gaming in the context of Tolkien's world: scenario ideas, rule suggestions, gaming product reviews, gamemastering aids, bibliographic resources, essays on Middle-earth, and whatever else our readership would like to see in print. In a word, Other Hands aims to be the definitive Tolkien-related gaming journal for a worldwide role-playing community. Within the pages of Other Hands, the interested gamer may publish materials with reference to any game mechanics he or she chooses (including Rolemaster and Middle-earth Role Playing). Such gaming material may deal with any time period of Tolkien's world, and need not be bound to what has already seen print in Iron Crown's modules. Other Hands provides this freedom because it is a nonprofit publication. Subscription rates are as follows: inside the USA—1 issue $3/4 issues $12; outside the USA—surface 1 issue $3.50/4 issues $14—air 1 issue $4.50/4 issues $18. Payment should be made to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948, USA. No Eurochecks, please!

Submissions are welcome in any form (preferably legible), but are easiest to edit when received on a floppy disk. Word for Windows is the editing software currently in use, so if there is any question as to the readability of your disk, please save your document in ASCII or text-only format and include a hard copy. All submitted materials remain the copyright of the author unless we are otherwise informed. All submissions must be sent to Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novato, CA 94948 (USA). Please write me or call if you encounter any difficulties, my phone number is (415) 892—9066. Please note also that I may be reached over Internet: chris1224@aol.com

Bibliography Addendum

(Contributions by Dirk Brandherm, Chris Pheby, and Michael Saunders)

"Die Ratten von Tharbad" *Zauberzeit* #? [DB: later included in the second edition of the German translation of *Thieves of Tharbad* (ICE #8050)]

"Das Breeland" *Der Orkbotespezial* 3

Ravenhorst 2 [DB: a special issue dedicated exclusively to Middle-earth—role-playing in the Second Age of Arda, lengthy adventure set in the Ered Luin, beyond Rhûn]

"MERP: The Making of a Character" *Fantasy Chronicles* 3: 9-11

"Speaking in Tongues: The Use of Languages in Fantasy Rolegames" *Fantasy Chronicles* 7: 30-32

"Five Farthings" *Fantasy Chronicles* 4: 27-32

New ICE Publications

Arnor (Realms of Middle-earth #2005)

Valar & Maiar: The Immortal Powers (Peoples of Middle-earth #2006)

Middle-earth Campaign Guide (Middle-earth Sourcebook #2003)

Middle-earth Role Playing: Second Edition (#2000)

Frontlines

Iron Crown is planning several Middle-earth releases before the end of this year. The new *Treasures of Middle-earth* should already be in the stores as we speak. The *Minas Tirith* revision has gone to the printers and is scheduled to appear sometime late in September. Happily, this revised module will include (we are told) a greatly improved map of the city. *Moria* is soon to be re-issued as a full-fledged Realm module, and is rumored to contain something like a hundred and forty pages of text. There are also plans to release an *Elves* People supplement and a Dol Guldur Fortress module before the end of the year. Finally, there is to be a "MERP Accessory Pack," a boxed supplement which will include stand-up cardboard figures and a book of floorplans and adventure layouts.

As for projects that are or may be on the drawing board, the *Kin-strife* manuscript is on ICE's desk and the contract for it has been signed. Initially, their hope had been to release it by Christmas, but I expect it will not come out until sometime (hopefully early) in 1995. The remaining contributions to the *Southern Condor* manuscript are presendy being made by yours truly, and we project that it will be in ICE's hands by the end of the year. Meanwhile, Jason Beresford still labors on the massive *Umbar* Realm module. Finally, I have accepted Jessica Ney's offer to write a Dúnedain People supplement, intimations of which may well be appearing in future issues of *Other Hands.*

There are rumors of other revision projects underway. I have heard that Realm modules are currently in preparation for Northern Gondor, Rhovanion, and Mordor. I have also heard tell of a Lake Town City module. It is quite possible that there are other revision and original work going on that I am not yet aware of. We'll do our best to find out more by next issue this January. Until then....

Reporter
Chris Seeman

Innate magic in Middle-earth

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This article is essentially a response to Andrew McMurry's article from OH *3: 11-12, which suggested that all the peoples of Middle-earth were born with a certain innate, magical energy which they may, if they know how, expend during the course of their lives. We want to develop this theme within the framework of* Middle-earth Role Playing *in order to find an alternative to the rather unsatisfactory Power Point system currently in use. In doing so, however, we have chosen not to consider the implications of our proposal for magic items. Maybe in the future it will be possible for ourselves (or someone else) to do this.*

Initial thoughts

It would seem that there are two main factors which influence the use of magic, from the Valar right down to the Drughu, which need to be accounted for. These may be thought of as innate or natural energy (with which one is born and can do little to change) and abilities learned or gained through study and experience.[1] Two factors, therefore, will influence a given character's innate energy: 1) that character's individual attainment of magical power, and 2) the racial and cultural background in which the character was reared.[2]

Hobbits, for instance, arc a very un-magical race, and have equally few powers (save through such items as are available to Men). Tolkien's Elves, on the other hand, are archetypal magic-users. However, even their magic was often veiled and hidden (such as that used by Elrond), or derivative from a relic of an older age (like the works of Celebrimbor). As time wore on, Elven-magic weakened (even though their knowledge grew). Like the Elves, the Valar and Maiar also clearly realised that their own powers were finite and failing.[3]

These themes may be related to more tangible game mechanics (by an absurd twist) through the relation expressed by Ohm's Law, which in modern physics defines the relationship of Volts (V), Amps (I) and Ohms (R) (V=IR). Ohm's Law expresses a relationship in which two factors define a third. It also correlates exactly with the relationship described by Andrew McMurry's model of a limited quantity of magical energy inherent to all sentient beings. With some adaptation, our translation of Ohm's Law could form the basis for a useful game mechanic.

By substituting what we shall call Magic Potential (a character's innate energy) for Volts (or potential difference), Ohms (or resistance) could be replaced with Magic Insight (which refers to how "attuned" to the ways of magic a character is—i.e., the lower this value is, the easier it will be for the character to work magic). The third value, Amps (or the current of a circuit), we replace with Magic Level (the greatest level of magic the character can operate with). This substitution results in the following equation:

Magic Potential / Magic Insight = Magic Level

The method presented here for calculating these values is designed with a view to character generation, but it can also be used in converting existing characters to the system.[4] We will describe the use and meaning of each statistic below. Once you've got through character creation, the system is surprisingly easy to use. All you have to remember is that the three values are often subject to change and that, once changed, the original values are no longer of importance. Throughout the remainder of this exposition, all fractions will be rounded up for purposes of calculation.

Magic Potential (MP)

A character's Magic Potential is dependent on two linked factors: 1) the realm of magic (in *MERP,* Essence or Channeling) through which the character operates—and, hence, the statistic associated with the use of magic in that Realm (in *MERP,* Intelligence or Intuition); 2) the character's race and/or culture.[5] To determine a character's MP, add the value of the appropriate statistic to the bonus for race/culture given by the table provided in this article.

Magic Insight (MI)

Magic Insight represents how well a character understands and is able to manipulate his or her innate energy. MI is very closely linked to MP, but is also affected by a character's profession, race, and culture.[6] To determine a character's MI, multiply the character's MP by a factor of ten. The sum is divided into the Magic Insight Divider (see table below), taking into account both the character's profession and the culture in which he or she was raised (Round any fractions up.). Note that greater insight is indicated by a lower score, while a higher score indicates a character who is very poorly "tuned" to magic.

Magic Level (ML)

Magic Level refers to the maximum spell level at which a character is able to work magic. It is determined by dividing MP by MI (rounding any fractions up). A character's ML does not enable that character to cast spells above the actual level of the character's profession (E.g., An 8th level mage with a ML of 12 still cannot cast spells above 8th level; while if the same 8th level mage only had an ML of 6, he would not even be able to cast spells beyond 6th level, despite the actual level of his profession). Any change in MP or MI necessitates a recalculation of the character's ML.

* These bonuses take into account both life-span and relative magical strength of the races. Note that the values for Elves are extremely high by virtue of their extended life-spans.

**The number in parentheses indicates Lowest Insight.

Race/Culture Table

Race/Culture Potential	Magic Insight Bonus*	Magic Divider**
Dwarves	**+3**	**4 (6)**
Umli	+1	5 (7)
Elves		
Noldor	+150	13 (3)
Sindar	+110	14 (3)
Silvan	+75	12 (4)
Peredhil	+40	8 (6)
Hobbit		
Fallohides	-5	6 (7)
Harfoots	-5	4 (8)
Stoors	-5	5 (8)
Men		
Beornings	+6	6 (7)
Black Númenóreans	+ 13	7 (6)
Corsairs	+ 14	7 (6)
Daen Coentis	+ 7	6 (7)
Dorwinrim	+ 5	5 (8)
Dúnedain	+17	7 (6)
Lesser Dúnedain	+12	7 (7)
Dunlendings	+5	5 (5)
Easterlings	+5	4 (8)
Haradrim (northern)	+6	6 (7)
Haradrim (southern)	+5	6 (7)
Lossoth	+6	6 (7)
Northmen	+5	6 (7)
Rohirrim	+5	6 (7)
Rural Men	+5	6 (7)
Urban	+5	5 (8)
Variags	+6	7 (7)
Woodmen	+5	5 (7)
Woses	+11	8 (5)
Orcs	**-10**	**3 (9)**
Uruk-hai	**-8**	4 (8)
Half-orcs	**+0**	3 (9)
Trolls	**-25**	**1 (10)**
Olog-hai	-15	1 (10)
Half-trolls	-10	2 (9)
Profession		
Warrior (Fighter)		1 (5)
Scout (Thief)		2 (4)
Ranger (Tracker)		3 (3)
Bard (Jack-of-all-trades)		3 (3)
Mage (Magician)		4 (1)
Animist (Cleric)		4 (1)

Factors affecting Magic Potential

1. Level advancement

When a character progresses to a new level under the existing *MERP* rules, Development Points are gained, some of which are allocated to learning spell lists. By contrast, in the magic system we have just outlined, the Development Points are no longer applied to learning spell lists; instead, each Development Point so allocated is added to the character's MP, thereby increasing it.[7]

2. Spell acquisition

Learning new spell lists requires a tutor or some other source of knowledge, and may be linked to other studies. Characters cannot acquire spells as if by magic—not even *AD&D* has an "acquire spell" spell! To learn magic is extremely arduous, and each spell in a list must be learned individually and in order of progression.[8] Each spell learned on a spell list costs one point of MP (E.g. To learn the first six levels of a list will cost 6 MP).[9] In addition, learning spells of a new list will always reduce MI by one point.[10]

3. Spell-casting

Magic Potential replaces the spell-casting function of *MERP* Power Points (i.e., the cost of casting a spell is now removed from a character's MP). Unlike Power Points, however, the loss of MP is permanent and unrecoverable.[11] A character whose MP falls below zero will die.[12]

Factors affecting Magic Insight

1. Study

Any magic-user who continues to cast a large amount of spells will eventually run out of MP. Most mages will try to reduce this loss of power in the interim by improving their MI through study. The exact nature of study will depend on both gamemaster and players. Some study will inevitably involve experimentation and will thus be accompanied by a loss in MP.[13] Books and tomes may also provide insight.[14]

2. Lowest Insight

Unfortunately, even the most dedicated scholar can do little to undo natural limitations and the prejudices created by a given way of life. This factor is reflected in what we call Lowest Insight (see the numbers given in parentheses in the Magic Insight Divider column of the table). Regardless of study, a character's MI value may never fall below this value.[15]

Excursus: generating an experienced character

The above guidelines for allocating a character's MP and MI scores ignore the level which a character may have already achieved.[16] The following system may help to simulate how a character's scores may have been altered as a consequence of previous experience. To determine how much MP a character has already exhausted, multiply the character's present level by the constant provided by the table below. This value will then be deducted from the MP score. MI will also change as a character becomes wiser to the ways of magic. The amount by which it will fall calculated in the same way as that of MP.[17]

Profession	Magic Potential	Magic Insight*
Warrior (Fighter)	2	1 (5)
Scout (Thief)	3	1(3)
Ranger (Tracker)	4	1 (10)
Bard (Jack-o'-trades)	4	1(10)
Mage (Magician)	6	2 (15)
Animist (Cleric)	8	2(15)

*The number in parentheses indicates a "maximum" level for the purpose of calculating MI. For example, an 8th level scout will have insight deducted only from his first five levels.

Example: Thelengral, a Silvan Elf

Thelengral is an 8th level mage with an Intelligence of 93. His MP will be 168 (93 for It + 75 for race). He was raised in Silvan society, so his MP x 10 is divided by 4 (for his profession) and 12 (for his race) to give an MI of 35.

However, because he is 8th level, his scores will have changed somewhat over time. As a mage, his MP will have fallen by 1 + 64 (8 x 8 points in the process of experimentation and normal spell-casting), leaving him with a MP of only 104. His MI will also have been reduced, reflecting his more advanced knowledge. As a mage, it will have improved by 16 (2 x 8, bringing the new total to 19).

Thelengral's ML is found by dividing his current MP of 104 by his current MI of 19. Any fractions are rounded up, giving a result of 6. This means he can cast spells up to sixth level. To summarize, Thelengral currently has a MP of 104, MI of 19, and a ML of 6.

Footnotes

1. These conform roughly to the view taken by biologists with respect to the interplay of genetic and environmental factors in the development of an organism.
2. This argument is very similar in nature to that proposed by Chris Pheby article on corruption in *OH* 1: 20-22, in which the relative strengths of each race play an important part (as Tolkien dearly stated).
3. It may be this desperation that led to the rebellion of such notable characters as Sauron and Saruman (although this is only part of the story). For Sauron the One Ring was more than just a weapon—it gave the opportunity to make his power immortal. Despite this, the powers and magic utilized by these beings are outside the scope of this one article.
4. Players used to First Age power levels may find this system quite limited. As an accommodation to such a setting, MP values might all be multiplied (after determining MI) by a constant (E.g. x 5, perhaps). There isn't much point applying this system to NPCs destined to be used once and then forgotten. In such cases, the system may be considered void, since it tends to focus on more long-term aspects of character development. Your players should never be any wiser anyway However, many campaigns have recurring arch-villains, and you might want to use this system with regard to these characters, as you can represent their development through time.
5. By this is meant the character's inherited culture, not the one in which the character was raised (as is the case with Adolescence Skill Development rules in *MERP*).
6. For example, a Dúnadan raised in Rivendell would be treated as an Elf for the purpose of calculating MI. Note that this differs from MP, which is a more innate quality.
7. Other kinds of points may be transferred to this "new" category as per normal.
8. In other words, the first spell of the list must be learned first, followed by the second and so on. The level to which a character knows each spell list should be duly recorded on the player's character sheet.
9. This procedure is meant to represent the innate energy expended through experimentation.
10. Although acquisition of spell lists will differ at other times from the normal *MERP* development process, during character creation spells and spell lists are developed in the same way as normal.
11. You may feel that the MP rules outlined above are too severe. Alternately, Power Points might be retained alongside MP as a renewable source of innate energy. For example, a character could receive as many PPs as his current level each day In the course of spell-casting, these renewable points would be used up first, and permanent MP called upon only after these had run out Use of all these temporary points at one time might result in unconsciousness or some other optional side-effect.
12. If you feel that this rule is too drastic, a loss of magic ability could be substituted as the minimum effect of total loss of MP.
13. Unfortunately, it is this very type of study which tends to provide the greatest amount of insight, and so many will find it necessary.
14. Six months in the libraries of Minas Tirith might reduce a character's MI by 2 or 3 points. Study is left very much to your discretion and the nature of your campaign.
15. Many may have tried to battle this and failed.
16. In our campaign, we began with the player-characters at 5th level.
17. It is important to ensure that a character's insight not fall below the minimums allotted by race and profession. In the event that it does, simply adjust it upwards so that it equals these scores.

The Cult of Benish Armon

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Cults are an underdeveloped aspect of many Middle-earth campaigns. It is a relatively simple task for most referees to conjure up crazed fanatics in black robes worshipping Darkness around a blood-stained alter; but it is less easy to produce plausible motives for why otherwise reasonable denizens of Middle-earth would subscribe to such fictions. Still less attention is given to developing a concrete and unique history for a given cult—most that have appeared in existing MERP *modules are typically subsumed under the amorphous canopy of "the Dark Religion," usually without further explanation.*

What follows is a description of a cult which figures prominently in the forthcoming Kin-strife *module, and which will also have connections to the* Umbar *realm module. It is presented here both as an exemplar of how more interesting cults might be designed, and as an expansion of the partial treatments of it which will be given in the aforementioned modules. In this article, the three collaborating authors offer an account of the origins, history, artifacts, and magic employed by the minions of Benish Armon.*

Introduction

The cult of Benish Armon draws together several distinct strands from Tolkien's writings, as well as various themes from the *Umbar* and *Kin-strife* modules. The concept underlying the cult is derived from Chris Seeman's previously published article "A Journey in the Dark" (*OH* 3: 13-18), which examines the extant traditions concerning the enigmatic figure of Queen Berúthiel. In essence, the cult of Benish Armon centers upon the cats which Berúthiel enslaved to do her bidding.

These cats are imagined to have been Maia-spirits which the Queen encountered and bound to her will during her sojourn in Ethir Anduin.

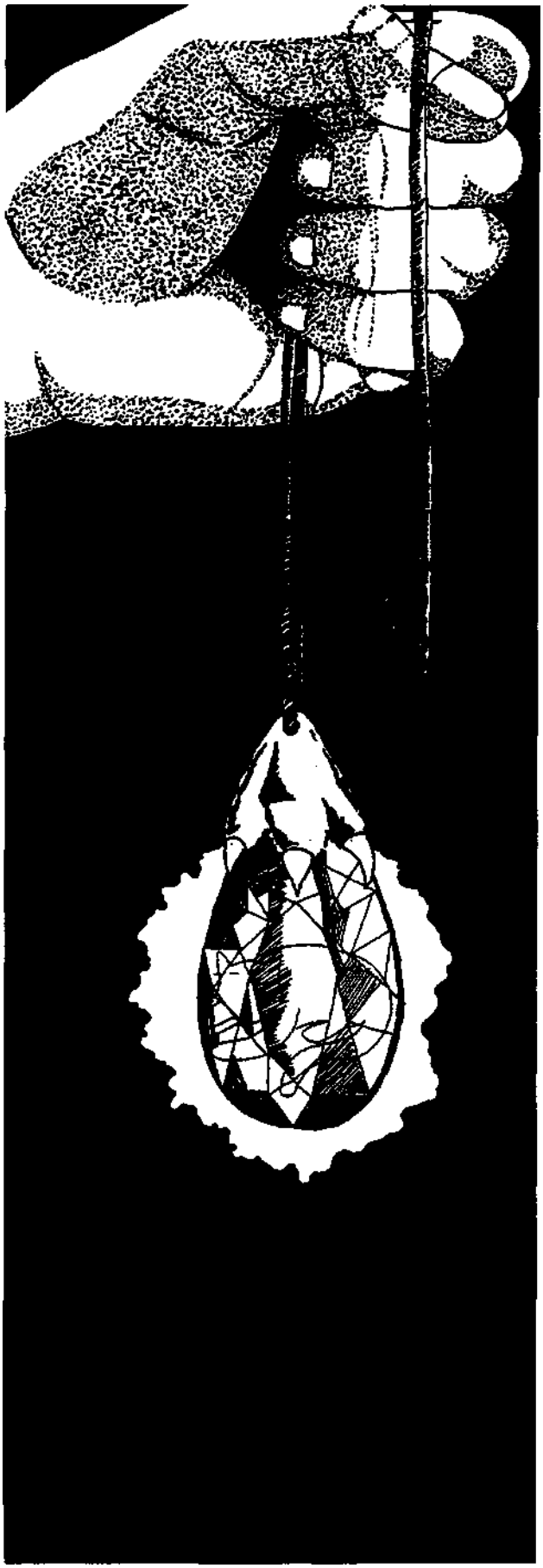
Following Berúthiel's so-called "expulsion" from Gondor, these cat-spirits returned to the Ethir where they became an object of worship for those of the Ethir Folk who had been associated with Berúthiel. The goal of the cult is to free the cats from the sorcerous bonds to which the Queen subjected them; in turn, the cats act as "guardians" over their Ethir followers and invest the cult leaders with magical power to effect their ends.

Although the cats are malevolent Maia-spirits and their predatory cult often entertains gruesome practices, they remain an "independent evil," scornful of domination by Sauron and his purposes. During the time of the Kin-strife, however, circumstances necessitate a grudging alliance between the servants of Benish Armon and those of the Necromancer, but this tenuous alliance is always in danger of turning into open conflict and opposition.

Jason Beresford's treatment of the Black Númenórean legacies of Umbar provided further background for this cult. His development of an ancient evil artifact known as the Kuilëondo created an important explanatory link between the origin of the cats and their subjection to Berúthiel. The Kuilëondo is a jewel of unlight which survived the wreck of Beleriand only to fall into the hands of Umbarean sorcerers over the course of the Second Age.

Berúthiel was herself a Black Númenórean from Umbar, as our version of her history will show, and it is by means of the Kuilëondo that she was able to bind the cats to her. It is through the Kuilëondo also that the subsequent minions of the cats are able to draw upon their Maia-powers, and Stefan Ardinger's spell list details some of these as they might be used in me course of a game.

Although the cult of Benish Armon does not itself figure in "Eyes of the Blind Night," the campaign presented in this issue of *Other Hands,* the cats and the Kuilëondo do. This article therefore forms an essential backdrop and supplement to running that campaign. Finally, some of the material presented here (particularly on the background of Berúthiel) will not be appearing in the *Kin-strife* module. While the information in this article does not conflict in any way with what is written in that module, neither is it necessary for the coherence of the soon-to-be-published material. It should be regarded therefore as an optional extension of what appears in the *Kin-strife* and *Umbar* modules.



The History and Origins of the Cult

Benish Armon is an ancient Daen Coentis site which lies in the midst of Ethir Anduin. It was abandoned after the lowlands surrounding the Anduin mouth were deluged by the global cataclysm accompanying the Akallabêth and transformed into a vast delta. Some years following the changing of the world, the Ethir became inhabited by the Falathrim—a coastal people migrating north from the broken seaward lands of their homeland on the peninsula of Umbar. At some point after these Falathrim became the Ethir Folk, the ruins of Benish Armon were made into the lair of malevolent Maiar-spirits that assumed a cat-like *fana*.

These were Tevildo and his nine thanes, who laid claim to Ethir Anduin as their domain and preyed upon its human inhabitants.[1] In T.A. 830, Queen Berúthiel of Gondor (who dwelt for a time in Ethir Anduin in a villa constructed by her husband, Tarannon Falastur), used the Kuilëondo to dominate the cats, and thereby freed the Ethir Folk from the terror of Benish Armon. But the tale of the cats, of Berúthiel, of the Kuilëondo, and of the cult that afterwards arose among the Ethir Folk, has much deeper roots.

The Nature and Fate of the Kuilëondo

The Kuilëondo is a spherically cut ruby, approximately six inches in diameter. Its deep red color is almost black. When magically activated and immersed in fresh blood, a pool of darkness emanates from the stone, growing larger and absorbing more light as it absorbs more and more blood.

Powers (*MERP*)

Since its transformation at the hands of Morgoth and Ungoliant, the basic characteristic of the Kuilëondo has been the absorption and containment of *thúle* or "spirit," one of the three elements that make up all rational incarnate beings (e.g., Elves, Men, Maiar). *Thúle* is the vital energy which holds body and soul together, though it is not *identical* to the soul (Q. *óre*). The principal difference between the *óre* and the *thúle* is that the latter may be transferred, used up or otherwise "spent" as a quantity of energy, whereas the former does not possess quantity; but is the essential core of a person's being, indestructible even by God. The active aspect of *thúle* is the will.

Thúle resides in blood, and the Kuilëondo absorbs *thúle* by absorbing blood. The gem is able to do this either through contact with a wounded person or through a grisly ritual involving blood sacrifice. Once absorbed, the *thúle* may be drawn upon by the wielder of the gem for magical use (additional PPs = victim's Pr + In + Em / 20) or for the artificial prolongation of the wielder's life. The Kuilëondo's powers are only accessible to mortal Men.

The capacity of the Kuilëondo to absorb *thúle* varies according to the biological and spiritual nature of its victim. Its power is only fully effective towards Men, since it is their unique doom that their *óre* escape the circles of the world *permanently* and *irrevocably* as soon as the link between body and soul is severed (unless God or the Valar directly intervene). This means that the gem can contain *thúle* from a mortal source indefinitely.

The Kuilëondo is less effective towards Elves, since it is their nature to be reincarnated in Aman should they die in Middle-earth before the End. The act of reincarnation reunites their *thúle* to their *óre*, which means that the wielder of the Kuilëondo can contain or make use of that *thúle* for a brief interim only. Hence, while Elven *thúle* could be temporarily co-opted for a boost in the wielder's magical power, any benefits accrued from the gem for the extension of one's life would be lost as soon as the victim's *thúle* was reincarnated into a new body (Elven *thúle* can only be held by the Kuilëondo for a number of hours equal to the victim's SD/10.).

Because Maiar are not incarnate by nature, their *thúle* cannot be severed from their *óre*; instead of "absorbing" the energy of such creatures, then, the Kuilëondo simply *binds* their entire being within itself. If the gem's wielder is possessed of a strong enough will, he or she may be able to *command* the imprisoned spirits as well as drawing upon their energy for magical use. At the same time, however, the inseparability of the Maia's *thúle* prevents the wielder from drawing upon it for the prolongation of life.

In order to bind or absorb *thúle*, the wielder must overcome a victim's RR level. If a person approaches the (unwielded) gem with open wounds or a debilitating illness, he or she must resist versus the 50th level potency of the Kuilëondo's power. The effects of either depend upon the nature of the being affected.

The ritual use of the Kuilëondo to extend life necessitates that the victim's heart be removed from the body and replaced with the gem before the victim dies. The wielder must utter a correct sequence of empowered words in order for the *thúle* absorbed from the victim's blood to be transferred to the wielder's own *thúle.* The wielder must also overcome the RR level of the victim's *óre.*

Should this fail, the victim's *thúle* will remain trapped in the gem as magical energy, and the Kuilëondo will redirect its absorbing power upon the wielder. If the wielder succeeds in overcoming the victim's *óre,* he or she will stop aging for a number of months equal to the victim's Co / 5 + total number of previously sacrificed victims. Additional sacrifices can only be made after the efficacy of the initial sacrifice completes its course. Failure to repeat the ritual will result in the accelerated aging of the wielder's body and irrevocable loss of the ability to recommence the process.

Origin and history

The Kuilëondo was crafted by Fëanor. It was one of the many gems stolen by Morgoth from the vaults of Formenos and fed to Ungoliant Only the most powerful of all the gems devoured by Ungoliant survived the ordeal and were subsequently belched forth from the spider. These few gems were transformed—their inner light turned to darkness and their powers perverted. Morgoth had all of these gems collected and placed in the vaults of Angband, where they were, for the most part, forgotten (and later lost forever in the destruction of that fortress in the War of Wrath).

The Kuilëondo escaped this oblivion as a result of having been given to one of Morgoth's mortal servants. This man, Gorothîr by name, used the Kuilëondo to entrap the wayward cat-spirits of Tevildo and his nine thanes, who at that time stalked the wilds of Beleriand, seeking prey to feed their divine hunger. Having enslaved the cats, Gorothîr sent them to spy upon the Eldar and their mortal allies, the Edain.

With the destruction of Angband and the capture of Morgoth, Gorothîr fled to the east and south, eventually finding his way to the northern shore of the Nen Umbar. There he encountered the forefathers of the Falathrim. Using the Kuilëondo, he commanded Tevildo and his thanes to capture many hapless Falathrim victims, who were slain in sacrifice to the Kuilëondo, whose power Gorothîr drew upon to prolong his life. Others of the Falathrim Gorothîr made into slaves, and set them to build for him a stronghold on the northwestern extremity of Umbar known as Vamag.

For over half a millennium, Gorothîr ruled the lands along the northern coast of the Nen Umbar through fear, threat, and bloody sacrifices. As the Second Age progressed, the Kuilëondo required increasingly frequent sacrifices to maintain Gorothîr's life, and the Falathrim population was becoming dangerously low. Haradrim avoided the northern Nen Umbar, fearing the evil "spirit" that dwelled there, so Gorothîr was left with raiding the Falathrim living along the southern coast of the Nen Umbar. In an orgy of killing spanning two centuries, the entire Falathrim population dwelling there were sacrificed to maintain Gorothîr's life.

Forced to return to "harvesting" sacrifices from the Falathrim along the Nen Umbar's northern coast, Gorothîr was overjoyed when five large ships sailed into the Nen Umbar. These Númenórean mariners were led by Aldarion the Mariner, son of Tar-Meneldur the king and Captain of the Venturers, who was then engaged in a coastwise exploration of the Harad. Perceiving that Aldarion and his men would yield up a more efficacious sacrifice for the Kuilëondo, he ordered Tevildo and his thanes to attack the Venturers once their ships made landfall.

Though surprised by the attack, Aldarion's men were able to fight off the ambush. Several more attacks were launched before six of the Venturers were captured. Their companions pursued their captors back to Vamag, but not before one of the captives was sacrificed. Aldarion attacked Vamag, managing to recover the survivors before being forced to retreat. A final parting shot by Aldarion's bow impaled Gorothîr's left arm, wounding him and breaking his link to the powers of the Kuilëondo.

Rapidly aging, Gorothîr sought sanctuary in Vamag, where he perished. Gorothîr's death, however, did not free Tevildo or his thanes from the Kuilëondo, though it had no wielder. For nearly fifteen centuries, the cats remained bound to Vamag, unable to act in physical form (though the horror of their memory hindered any of mortal race from drawing near to their resting place, until the coming of Adûnaphel to Umbar in S.A. 1914).

Adûnaphel's choice of Vamag as her residence in Middle-earth all but guaranteed the rediscovery of the Kuilëondo. Disregarding its evil reputation, the ambitious Dúnadan lordess ordered that her citadel be built upon the ruins of Gorothîr's stronghold. During the construction, the Kuilëondo was uncovered and Adûnaphel, already familiar with its history, began researching its powers.

Focusing on its life-extending properties, she documented how they could be tapped; but Adûnaphel never became aware of the Kuilëondo's other powers, or of the cat-spirits that were bound within it. Deeming it too dangerous to use, and seeking true immortality rather than a mere extension of her life, she put the stone and her notes aside in a kregora-lined box, and placed them in her most secure vault There they remained, undiscovered by the King's Men as they dismantled Adûnaphel's citadel following her rebellion.

Late in the Second Age, the Kuilëondo was discovered once again by a slightly mad, middle-aged Númenórean named Gorlim, who was desperate to avoid death. Gorlim followed rumor after rumor, seeking the mythical gem that would keep death at bay. Gorlim made contact with the entrapped spirit of Tevildo, agreeing to release the cats from their prison in exchange for knowledge of the Kuilëondo's use. The Prince of Cats gladly accepted Gorlim's offer, instructing him in bloody sacrifice and the stealing of mortal life-force. Gorlim then held to his promise, freeing the cats from the Kuilëondo and leaving them to inhabit Vamag in physical form, where they were to dwell until the Akallabêth, when Vamag was destroyed.

The Kuilëondo, however, remained in Gorlim's possession. With Pharazôn's corruption and the establishment of the worship of Melkor in Armenelos and many of the Númenórean colonies, Gorlim came to the Temple in Umbar. His age and vigor providing all the proof needed to demonstrate the "favor" granted to him by Melkor (At the time of Sauron's capture by Ar-Pharazôn, Gorlim was as old as Elros.). Gorlim assumed a central political role in Umbar and its official cult.

Gorlim's fate is unknown, but the Temple in which he and the Kuilëondo resided fell soon after the Akallabêth, due to a rebellion against those who had joined Ar-Pharazôn in the Great Armament that had led to the downfall of their homeland. This revolt was brought to an end with the arrival in Umbar of Fuinur and Herumor, two expatriate brothers from Pelargir who had abandoned me Faithful after Elendil's sons claimed the kingship. With Fuinur and Herumor's aid, the rebel faction overthrew the Temple, and Gorlim was robbed of the Kuilëondo during the course of the struggle.

The Kuilëondo then fell into the possession of Fuinur, who became a lord over the Haradrim during the last years of the Second Age. Although he never made use of the Kuilëondo's powers, both Fuinur and his brother were corrupted by Sauron to make war upon their kinsfolk in Gondor in the War of the Last Alliance (through Sauron's promise to them of the throne of Gondor). Herumor perished in that great conflict; but Fuinur fled the Dagorlad, returning to Umbar to await the end.

With Sauron vanquished and his own years growing short, Fuinur succumbed to the weakness of his race, seeking ever for a means of averting Death for all time. But though desperate, Fuinur was no fool; he knew the peril of using the Kuilëondo to prolong life and would not be deceived as Gorlim had been. In time, he believed he had found another way.

Having sent out his servants throughout the South in the hopes of finding some forgotten elixir to his ailment, Fuinur heard rumor of a place beneath the surface of the Mirror of Fire where flowed living waters that would preserve life unending. To this desert place he withdrew with all his court, and descended into the depths of Haradwaith. The Kuilëondo went with him. The year was S.A. 3441.

The Mirror of Fire was the site where the primeval fires of Ormal had shattered the face of Arda in Melkor's assault upon the Valar. The devouring flames of the lamp consumed the waters encircling Almaren, the island in the middle of the great lake of the gods. The lifeless desolation of the Mirror of Fire bore the scars of ancient Almaren, but beneath its surface still ran hidden veins of those primeval waters from the First Spring of the world.

The Prophecy of Zimrakhil

As the day of Tarannon's ascension approached, the lords of Umbar grew fearful; for they could not forever hope to resist the might of Elendil's sons through their waning power. And yet this impending doom was but the canvas for a peril that lay the heavier upon their minds—their race was dying.

After the fall of Sauron and the disappearance of Fuinur, the King's Men had dwindled in numbers, and much of their blood became merged with that of Lesser Men. So it was that in the time of Tarannon no woman of pure lineage remained to perpetuate their name. They called upon Melkor to deliver them from their fate, and spilled the blood of many sacrifices upon the alter of their Temple, to hasten if they might the promise of deathlessness spoken to their fathers of old.

Their minds became twisted with despair, and many slew themselves in their madness and pride; but then one arose among them who spoke in whispered counsels of a way by which their salvation might be won and their foes overthrown. His name was Zimrakhil, and he was a wicked lord of necromancy of the brood of Herumor.

'The Lord of Ancient Darkness does not lie,' he said to them. 'Deathlessness he has promised to those that serve him, and these words were not spoken lightly; but the malice of the Valar has frustrated his designs, and the Sons of Elendil hinder the coming of that day. But when their might is overthrown and they look upon the naked lies of their masters, *then* will they cast themselves in shame upon our alters to the glory of Melkor; but this honour we must earn by our own design.'

But the lords of Umbar answered, 'You speak of victories not yet achieved and of honour yet to be had, but with each passing day our foes grow stronger and we the weaker! Will any of our race even live to see that day, though it should come to pass? Open your eyes to the truth, clever seer! Behold, among us no woman still lives whose veins pump with the blood of Ar-Pharazôn!'

Then Zimrakhil's voice grew soft yet venomous, and he mocked their disbelief. 'Fools! Fainthearted fools! That you should be unmanned by your own forgetfulness, while the proof of Melkor's words lies before your gaping faces! For there *is* a woman of our blood that yet lives, and whose years have surpassed even those of Elros Tar-Minyatur, greatest-blessed of our race.'

'Of whom do you speak?'

Then Zimrakhil laughed, and the sound of his laughter echoed through the temple of Melkor. 'Ancalimë,' he said at last. 'The daughter of Fuinur.'

But the King's Men looked at him once more in doubt: 'Why do you speak to us of legends?'

'I speak only of what mine own eyes have seen; for I have been to Fuinur's Well and have looked upon the face of our forefather,' answered the prophet with slow relish. 'And he lives.'

There was hushed astonishment in the Temple as the lords of Umbar contemplated what this might mean. Then at last they asked: And what of Ancalimë his child?'

'She sleeps beside her father and all his court, far beneath the surface of Arda; but soon she will be awakened, and her presence will herald our salvation and the downfall of our foes.'

These living waters were "breathable," and indeed preserved mortal life, suspending the flow of Time if a person were to be immersed in them (just as Fuinur had heard from the legends of his Haradan subjects). What the aging Dúnadan lord did not know was that a mortal exposed over-long to the water would fall into a dark sleep—endless, unless the slumbering individual were returned to the realm of air by someone else. But if immersion in the primal waters of Almaren halted Time's course, removal from them would cancel their effect, subjecting the person once again to the Doom of Men. And if the person had passed beyond their allotted span of years in the waters beneath, Doom would come upon them all the swifter after returning to the surface.

Into these waters Fuinur and his court descended, after Fuinur used me magical power stored within the Kuilëondo to summon forth water spirits, commanding them to construct for him and his followers a palace at the watery roots of Almaren. And from this submarine throne-room, Fuinur for a time continued to rule the Harad, until the sleep took him and his court, and all rumor of them ceased.

During the time when Fuinur had established his new dominion from beneath the Mirror of Fire, he had given the Kuilëondo to his foster-daughter, Ancalimë, whom he had taken into his house following the death of her father in Umbar during the rebellion against the Temple. Ancalimë was the daughter of Ar-Pharazôn's Captain in Umbar, and her mother had herself been a cousin of Pharazôn.

Ancalimë was to sleep in Fuinur's well for nearly a thousand years, before she was to become Berúthiel, Queen of Gondor and, soon after, to meet a Doom not of her devising. Through her, Tevildo and his thancs were to be once again bound to the Kuilëondo, and out of that binding would be born the cult of Benish Armon.

The awakening of Ancalimë

Ancalimë was brought forth from the waters of Almaren by a Black Númenórean sorcerer named Zimrakhil in the year 830 of the Third Age for a dual purpose. The first was to defend the cult of Melkor against its detractors in Umbar, by producing "proof" that Melkor's promise of an escape from Death was real. The reappearance of the daughter of Ar-Pharazôn's last Captain of the Haven—now having surpassed even Elros' lifespan by many lives of men—was to be ample material for renewing commitment to the dying ideals of the King's Men.

The second, and deeper, purpose for calling the foster-daughter of Fuinur from her sleep was a secret plot to plant within the line of the kings of Gondor the seed of their own destruction by Sauron's coming dominion. Foreseeing the return of his Dark Lord in a dream, Zimrakhil perceived that many centuries—too many—would have to pass before Sauron would have rebuilt enough of his ancient power to contest the present and growing might of the Dúnedain of the South-kingdom.

A child would have to be born to the heir of Elendil, a child in whose veins would run the blood of both the King's Men and the Faithful, an heir to the throne whose dual bloodline could serve as a basis for Sauron to corrupt Gondor from within—to influence and even secretly rule his enemies through the hand of one of their own. Ancalimë would bear that child.

Zimrakhil knew that Ancalimë would not have long to live once removed from the waters, for in sleep she had already passed nearly *three* lives of even the strongest bloodlines after the Akallabêth; but as the wife of the King, she might live long enough to perform the task required of her. The sorcerer also knew that more than eight centuries of sleep in the waters of Almaren would cloud Ancalimë's memory of who and what she was...until it was too late.

Already when she was brought out of Fuinur's well, Zimrakhil had devised a means of masking Ancalimë's true identity and purpose—both to her and to the men of Gondor. Zimrakhil knew of the Kuilëondo that she bore, but not even he could foresee that Ancalimë was fated to encounter the cats once again, nor that she would use their divine power to learn the one terrible secret that the sorcerer so wished to keep from her.

King Siriondil of Gondor passed away early in the year 830 after a long and prosperous reign over the South-kingdom. His son and heir, Tarannon, was soon to take the crown, and needed a queen. A woman was already betrothed to him—Berethiel, daughter of Prince Thorondur of Arnor. Berethiel was journeying to Gondor by ship, and was to meet her husband-to-be at the isle of Tolfalas, where Tarannon had quartered himself as Captain of the Hosts under his father.

Zimrakhil's plan was to intercept this ship, kill Berethiel and all of her crew, and set the still slumbering Ancalimë upon it. A malevolent storm-spirit would be summoned to provide a natural explanation for the wreck of her ship and the loss of her crew. Ancalimë would awaken as Berethiel, and no one in Gondor would realize the deception. This was carried out.[2]

At first, Ancalimë accepted the name and identity those around her gave to her, though the darkness of her memory ever tormented her—and increasingly so as time wore on, until she found herself to be with child. Troubling fragments of her real past began to haunt her dreams, but she could not understand their true meaning. The bodily anguish of eight centuries of borrowed life then began to assail her, driving her to the brink of madness.

These things all took place during the time when Tarannon her husband was away making war on the lords of Umbar. Berethiel then dwelt in Ethir Anduin in a villa which the king had built. In time, she became aware of the malevolent power that stalked Benish Armon.

At the last, she came to realize that Berethiel was dead, and that she was in truth Ancalimë, daughter of Fuinur, who by her mortal nature should have died in centuries past. Her death was inescapable, but would her child live? And, if so, to what evil fate was it destined? She had to learn the truth, or she would not have been able to bear her torment another day. She would seek out the cats of Benish Armon

Ancalimë never knew that Tevildo and his thanes had once been enslaved to the wielder of the very same Kuilëondo that she now bore, but she had watched Fuinur use it to command immortal powers, and would now invoke it to do so again. The confrontation was brief, for the cats did not foresee the Kuilëondo's return. They were bound to Ancalimë and to her fate. From that binding, stronger than any other they had known, the cats could be released by Ancalimë alone...or by her child.

Ancalimë returned to Osgiliath to bear her child, and the cats accompanied her. Her child's birth was kept a secret, both by her wish and by the king's later command; it was never recorded in the Annals of the Kings, lest those evil powers that willed it could not easily find it and turn it to their purposes. Hence, Tarannon was called childless, and the succession passed to Eärnil his nephew, who wrote down a secret history of the affair that was hidden in the Hall of the Faithful in Pelargir.

In the remaining days that were left to Ancalimë, alone in Osgiliath with her child, she sent the cats about the realm to learn the whole truth of what had happened on Berethiel's ship as it passed into that unnatural storm off the coast of Tolfalas; to learn who these men were that had robbed her of her eternal sleep; and to discover what perils lay ahead for her child. To accomplish this, the immortal sight of Tevildo and his thanes was joined to those windows that hold knowledge of what is, what was, and what may yet be—the *palantíri*.

Out of diese last days in Osgiliath was derived the greater part of the legend and infamy surrounding the figure of "Berúthiel" (as folk now referred to her). But in truth they were brief, and finding her in anguish, Eärnil brought her to her husband Tarannon, on Tolfalas, where she died. Her body was set adrift on a boat, and was received into the bosom of Uinen. The cats, bound to her in their *fana*, went with her.

The Kuilëondo did not, however, for Ancalimë had given it into the care of Eryn, one of her handmaidens from the Ethir Folk, before her death. When at last Ancalimë surrendered her weary spirit to Mandos, Tevildo and his thanes lost once again their physical shapes, and were drawn back to Benish Armon, the place of their binding. There they met Eryn, the girl who now possessed the Kuilëondo, and with her Tevildo made a pact, which was to become their cult.

The cult of Benish Armon

As a consequence of their second binding, Tevildo and his thanes were now unable to move beyond the confines of Benish Armon, unless Ancalimë or someone descended from her who wielded the Kuilëondo chose to release them. In the absence of Ancalimë

herself, moreover, this release could only be effective if it took place on ground that had been hallowed to Melkor, whose servants had brought about Ancalimë's unnatural fate by removing her from the waters of Almaren. Such ground existed now only in Umbar, on the site of its Temple, which was razed to the ground by Eärnil in T.A. 933 and its foundations sealed beneath a strong tower that he caused to be built there.

Tevildo realized that he could not hope for freedom from his bondage unless he could appeal to the Ethir Folk for help. Erin agreed to aid the cats in exchange for Tevildo's promise that the cats would no longer prey upon the Ethir Folk, but would instead become their protectors. In return for this promise, Erin and her folk would seek knowledge of Ancalimë's child, in order that they might bring it to Benish Armon. Through the Kuilëondo, Tevildo granted Erin and her successors magical powers to aid them in attaining their goal.

Tevildo's powers (*MERP*)

The Prince of Cats has developed means of projecting his *thúle* through the Kuilëondo, even though it remains a constraint and limitation upon his powers. Through the medium of the gem, Tevildo can do one of three things: 1) summon his thanes, 2) transfer certain powers to the wielder of the Kuilëondo as it pleases him, or 3) visibly project his presence out of the gem for a brief period of time. Each of these activities are subject to certain conditions.

Summoning

Tevildo's thanes lose their perceptive capabilities outside of Benish Armon; but his domination of these lesser spirits allows the Prince of Cats, through the Kuilëondo, to call them individually to his current position. This, however, can only be attempted on a night of the dark moon (the day of the month when they were bound by Ancalimë). Moreover, Tevildo's summons must be accompanied by a blood sacrifice, whose scent draws the keen-nosed cats to the desired location. The sacrifice must be performed with a ritual dagger only possessed by members of the cult.

In order to *remain* free of Benish Armon without *fana,* Tevildo's thanes must feed upon mortal *thúle.* The cats do this by "infesting" a living victim's body (they are incorporeal). The effect of this infestation is the gradual corruption of the "host" body from within. Eventually, the victim's soul is severed and passes away while the corpse becomes an empty husk, petrified into a tormented effigy of the person. The infestation process reduces the victim's stats at a rate of 5 points / day, and can only be reversed by the most powerful healing magic.

Power transfer

Because the Kuilëondo enables the transfer of *thúle* as magical energy, Tevildo is able to incorporate some of his own powers as a Maia into that exchange. In this way the Prince of Cats gives assistance to the wielder of the gem beyond the pure availability of extra Power Points. The nature of this assistance depends in part upon the wielder and in part upon the nature of the goal to be accomplished.

As a sign of the cats' power and as proof of their covenant with the Ethir Folk who serve them, Tevildo has conferred the power of shapeshifting upon the mistress of the cult, enabling her to assume the form of a large hunting cat at will (and at no PP cost to her). This transformation (which takes one round) affects the body only, and anything the woman might be carrying with her in human form will be discarded. In addition to the accompanying feline abilities, all knowledge and human skills are retained while in cat-shape (though some of these may be unusable).

Tevildo's capacity to channel power through the gem extends to his generic Maia abilities to adapt the *fana* to its environment. This means that the Prince of Cats is able to grant heightened maneuvering skills to the gem's wielder (up to +100 bonus on all maneuvers related to climbing, jumping, hiding and sneaking) as well as increased speed in accomplishing these maneuvers.

The white face

Without *fana*, the naked visage of the Prince of Cats is terrible to look upon, and can drive mortal Men to madness. If the wielder of the Kuilëondo is in need, Tevildo may expend enough energy to project a luminous outline of his face about the gem. Except when he is inside Benish Armon, it is very power-consuming for the cat to reveal himself in this way (e.g., five times in one day would be taxing). The result is a greenish flash of light (a 20th level attack). Those that fail their RRs are left confused by horrible visions of cat-demons, which will last for a number of days equal to the failure of the RR (i.e., if a character failed the roll by 32%, the madness will last for 32 days). A failure of 50% or more results in permanent insanity.

The cult in action

The cult of Benish Armon emerged soon after Ancalimë's death around 830 or 831, and spent the next five hundred years searching for the identity and location of any living descendant of Ancalimë, in vain. Fearing for his child's safety, but not willing to expose his wife's son to the public eye, because of her now questionable heritage, Tarannon caused the babe to be secretly fostered by Gundor his Steward, who became the first Prince of Morthond. Gundor took the boy as his own, and made him the heir of his house. So it was that the bloodline of Berúthiel and Tarannon lived on in the princely line of Morthond, unknown even to the later scions of that house.

It is during the time of the Kin-strife (1432-1448) that knowledge of the child's fate comes to the ears of Tevildo. Spies sent by the Necromancer to search out the ruined capital of Osgiliath discover a forgotten inscription attesting to the identity of Berúthiel's child, and these are commanded by the Dark Lord to seek out Benish Armon: in order to provide this knowledge to the Prince of Cats and his cult—for a price.

Sauron knows that the cats can only be freed by the hand of Ancalimë's descendant on ground sacred to Melkor. In exchange for the descendant's name and access to the hidden foundations of Melkor's Temple in Umbar, Sauron demands that Tevildo and his servants gain the confidence of this descendant, and to prepare him for the destiny that Sauron has set for him—to rule the Dúnedain on his behalf.

Tevildo and his thanes have ever eschewed the domination of a greater evil power, and the discovery of Ancalimë's descendant promises release from this and all other such compulsion; but now the Dark Lord seeks to use them for his own purposes. The cult of Benish Armon has no apparent choice but to accede to Sauron's terms; yet there will be many uncertainties along the way to fulfilling their obligation, and circumstances might arise that could turn the tables against the Necromancer and in their favor. The adventures appearing in the forthcoming *Kin-strife* module, and their sequel appearing in this issue of *Other Hands,* offer one possible resolution of this conflict. There are others as well.

Footnotes

1. Tevildo, Prince of Cats is, of course, derived from the infamous cat-lord appearing in *Lost Tales II:* 15- 58, a fascinating character which Tolkien never developed further in any of his published writings. In surveying the totality of published and unpublished writings concerning Middle-earth, Tevildo emerges as the only extant example of how Tolkien might have developed a feline character of dark significance. For this reason, and for its intrinsic interest, we have chosen to meld this strand of *Lost Tales* with the mysterious cats of Queen Berúthiel. Reading Berúthiel's cats as Maiar-spirits is certainly not the only possible explanation for Tolkien's story; it does not, however, conflict with either the letter or spirit of the Berúthiel tradition, and in any event creates intriguing game possibilities.
2. Refer to Eärnil's history of Berúthiel provided in the accompanying campaign materials for "Eyes of the blind night" (see insert) for details.
3. The names, functions, and domains of magical power for Tevildo's thanes are here listed in brief: Miaule (function: personal attendant; domain: ritual preparation), Umuiyau (function: herald and gatekeeper; domain: wards and magical protection), Oikeroii (function: personal bodyguard; domain: hunting magic), Raukoruth (function: bodyguard and war counsel; domain: battle magic), Thindae (function: spy; domain: stealth magic), Caronuial (function: assassin; domain: death magic), Curugûl (function: sorcerer and loremaster; domain: knowledge-acquiring magic and instruction), Mithia (function: healer; domain: healing magic), Maeguen (function: emissary; domain: mental control).

Spells of the Cult

The servants of Benish Armon draw upon the power of Tevildo and his nine thanes, each of whom governs a specific domain of Maia-power.[3] Unless the cats are temporarily summoned by the Kuilëondo (see above), their power is only effective within the boundaries of the Ethir itself. This stricture does not, however, apply to the wielder of the Kuilëondo, as she is able to move about freely with her master's spirit. Detailed below is a list of exemplary spells that the Ethir Folk typically use.

Cat-like visage (Domain: Tevildo)

One of the first spells learned by the servants of Benish Armon grants the caster the illusion of being a bipedal cat of local coloring and of me size of the person being effected. Yes, there is a tail, which, yes, can carry a small amount, until the spell fades. People have been known to use the spell for intimidation in combat.

The caster kneels in front of a statue of Tevildo, and begins the chant: "Cher solser, octolias li, Tevildo" (Cat Lord, blessed one, Tevildo). The caster then gazes up into the eyes of the statue (often of jade or emerald), the eyes of both the caster and the statue now glowing a dull green. The caster continues: "Octol ghi siget dol niagith" (Bless me with your visage). At this point, an outline of the cat-visage will form around the caster. The visage is transparent. The caster and the statue are radiating green magic at this point. The casting continues with: "ser felar ariethir, ith stil ser har lestil!" (thy feline greatness, and let thy will be done). The image becomes solid, and the casting is complete.

Sensory acuteness (Domain: Thindae)

This spell, often the second taught to adherents of the cult, enhances both physical and magical awareness as a given situation may demand. An additional level of power must be expended by the caster for each sensory domain sought out for enhancement.

The caster inhales the smoke from a small burning incense stick, with eyes closed. The chant begins: "Gi mel ser shetao ith ser joelai, Thindae" (I ask thy sight and thy hearing, Thindae). Eyes opening, and looking off as though day-dreaming, the caster's eyes begun to glow a green color. The caster continues: "Cher nahal, fe deir gi jer felimore" (Cat Thane, so that I may perceive).

Cat's paw (Domain: Oikeroi)

This spell causes two-inch long magical claws to form on the tips of the casters fingers, which exude a dull green glow. They remain active for as long as the spell is operative (no longer than five minutes). The more magical power invested in the claws, the more damaging they become. At normal strength, the claws are about as effective as a shortsword, though when boosted they can be as damaging as some pole-arms. The spell is typically used only in self-defense.

In order to cast it, the caster must stand in a crouching position, with hands straying, making passes with the following words: "Oikeroi, ser dokham re gied esteirier" (Oikeroi, thy claws to my might). The tips of the caster's fingers ignite with glowing green blades. The chant continues: "k'lario octole fo malaen, arimus ghi" (this blessing in battle, aid me). The caster may men attack with the claws.

Summon T'malshi (Domain: Curugûl)

This is one of the more important spells a servant of Tevildo may learn to cast. It grants to the caster a companion to whom they may look for aid or assistance. A T'malshi is a cat with magically-enhanced intelligence (though not necessary all that smart by human standards). Although it's own entity, the T'malshi is linked to the caster, who will experience physical pain should the companion ever be wounded or slain.

To initiate the spell, some powder ground from shells must be tossed with some herbs upon an open fire, after the caster has assumed "Cat-like visage." The first part of the chant begins with the caster calling the attention of the Prince of Cats and his sorcerer: "Curugûl, Tolehdo nam Tevildo, gi anol kot ser be-kolin" (Curugûl, Sorcerer of Tevildo, I call for thy skill). A packet of herbs, containing catnip and other aromatic scents, is tossed upon the fire, producing a sweet odor attractive to cats: "Gi anol matalani, Curugûl, someliy arimus, te solas-je, te octolias solas-an nam ser solser, Tevildo" (I call outward, Curugûl, seeking aid, a companion, a blessed servant of thy lord, Tevildo).

There is an expectant pause, as the slower burning herbs ignite, creating a lot of smoke and a bright flash: "Curugûl, Gi mel ser ramati re anol te felar niagith nam arimus, te n'mar solas-an nam Tevildo, te sholn etimir, gi ith gied solser" (Curugûl, I ask thy summons, to call a feline visage of aid, a true servant of Tevildo, a connection between me and my lord).

Many times, the caster will lapse into unconsciousness from the casting of the spell. When reawakened, there will be some kind of local feline (appropriate to either the surrounding area—often the largest possible, but it is random, as the caster has no idea what they are calling). When the caster does not lapse into unconsciousness, the cat is very close.

T'malshi senses (Domain: already established through "Summon T'malshi")

This spell enables the caster to perceive the world through the senses of a T'malshi companion—very useful, though potentially dangerous, as the caster is more susceptible to taking damage if the T'malshi is wounded in this state.

The spell begins with the following chant: "Gi toren ser shetao, haria sered shesil gied T'malshi" (I need thy eyes, what thou seest, My T'malshi). The eyes of both the caster and the T'malshi glow green, then the caster closes their eyes, so the glow is no longer visible: "Gied ulindi solas-je, kaln gi mi octolias holin ser shetao mi aygil octole nam Thindae" (My guiding companion, may I be blessed with thy sight, by the blessing of Thindae). The caster can see though their T'malshi's eyes, hear though their ears, etc. Though they do not hear through their own for this. They may, at anytime, back out of the spell, and use their own senses, then return to the T'malshi's.

Mental Illusion (Domain: Maeguen)

This spell enables the caster to place strange and distracting images into an opponent's mind—very annoying, but extremely useful—rendering the victim disoriented and ineffectual.

To cast the spell, the caster's eyes narrow, focusing on the target, their hands making mystic passes, as they chant: "Ser arimus re ghi, Mantil gied malerlar, matilis derlar siget ser lirimantii, Maeguen." (Thy aid to me, confuse my enemies, distract them with thy illusions, Maeguen). The magic radiates off the caster, some of it seeking the target (visible only to other users of magic), as the caster continues: "Stil derlar shesil dier heaira am roel earthil!" (Let them see that which is not there!). The illusions then take place in the mind of the victim

Bestow cat-sight (Domain: Miaule)

This spell grants the caster night-vision equivalent to that of a cat. It's side-effect is that, also like cats, the caster will be color-blind for the duration of its effect. While affected, the caster's eyes will appear cat-like.

The caster makes several passes, eyes glowing, while the following words are chanted: "Tarage' ser shetao, K'lario cao azilias, Miaule" (Bestow thy eyes, upon this touched, Miaule). The caster then reaches out and lightly touches the receiver of the spell, still chanting: "Kaln dimal shesil lim sered lemsol" (May this one see even as you).

Cat guardian (Domain: Umuiyan)

This spell creates the visual illusion of a cat which appears to watch over the servants of Benish Armon while they sleep. If the confines of their repose are invaded, the guardian will emit a loud roar, magically awakening those with in the camp. The illusion then moves forward to intimidate the intruder (though it cannot actually cause physical damage).

The caster will move about the camp, placing small pouches of herbs at selected boundary points of the spell. Then the caster will begin to chant: "Colmdefalore kot cau morte', Nahal nam Litimantis, Nahal nam calijor, Solder nam felarias am mely" (Protection for this night, Thane of illusion, Thane of magic, Lord of Felines, is asked).

At this point, the pouches glow that nice dull green, as do the caster's eyes. The caster continues the chant: "Colmdefalore fo aygil morte' oliain" (Protection in the night that comes). There is the image of a large cat forming about two feet in front of the caster, the pouches now glowing brightly: "tiedi dilar solas-ka raimior malin ser so)as-an" (from those that would harm thy servant). The image of the cat solidifies, and will be seen walking around the camp, occasionally stopping to dose here and mere, until dawn, when the cat will fade into nothingness.

Ûvatha the Horseman

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This MERP adventure is spawned by a simple mishap, but presents complex problems into which the characters (preferably strangers) are thrown. The player-characters are given the chance to meet one another, gossip and pick up rumors. Very quickly, they will realize that there is evil afoot and that dark things have stirred in a nearby forest. Together, they must find a missing child, battle with Trolls, and even pursue Ûvatha the Horseman, one of the nine Nazgûl.

Sounds difficult? That depends on how the problem is tackled. The characters are given a chance to discover how their tactics and planning might affect the final outcome. For those used to a simple dungeon-bash, they will not get that here. Assuming their common sense prevails, this scenario can be completed by three to five characters of fifth to seventh level, and should last between three and five hours. Timing plays a vital role in this adventure, because the time available to the characters for realizing their objective is limited.

"Curtains rise" on the 13th of October, T.A. 3017. It's a wet, blustery day on the Great Road joining Rohan and Anórien. The common room at the Inn of Greys—billed as the first and last inn of Rohan—is understandably crowded. Imagine The Prancing Pony, and you're nearly there…

A Tale of Two Trolls and a Nazgûl

Gnash-nash and Bognog are a pair of Hill Trolls who just want a little peace. Having fled their home in the Drear Hills in an attempt to escape the raiding scum of the White Hand, the two Trolls have found refuge in the Firien Wood of Anórien, where they have holed up in an abandoned cave.

For a brief while, they found the peace that they sought, being able to live off the odd sheep, rabbit or even bear they happened upon. They weren't bold enough to sample manflesh, but at least none of the Horse-men tried to catch them, although one ferret-like man did follow them to their hole.

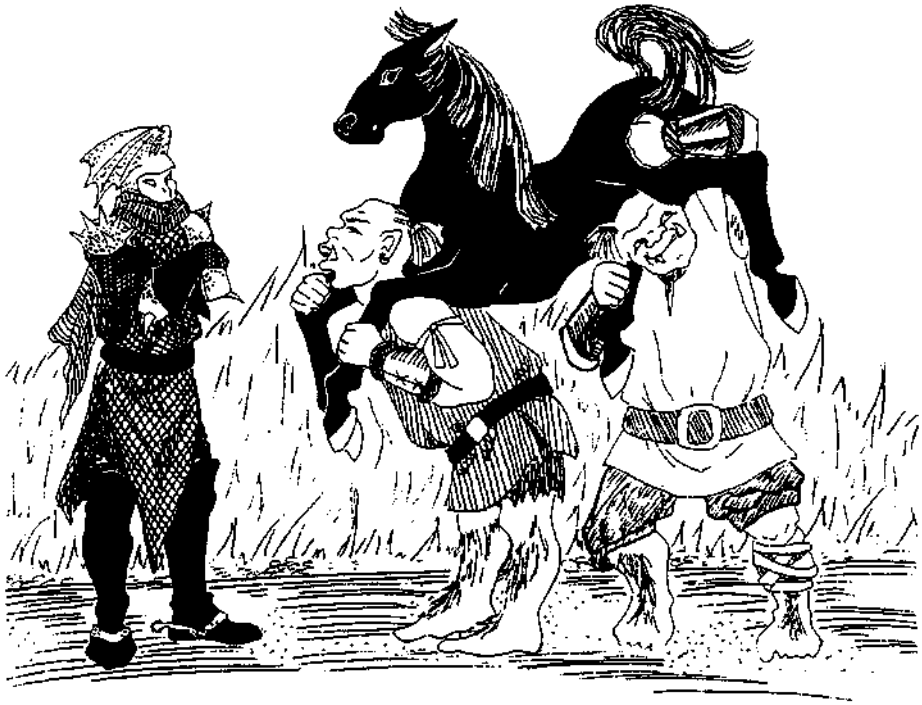
All this changed a few days ago when the Eye of Sauron found fit to call upon them. Ûvatha the Ringwraith had been sent to insure that they weren't wavering in the cause of Mordor, and was prepared to use violence to bend them back to his will if necessary. He had one simple task for the Trolls: to find him a suitable steed. The reason for this was very simple—Ûvatha had lost his mount shortly after crossing the Anduin in the course of the hunt for the One Ring.

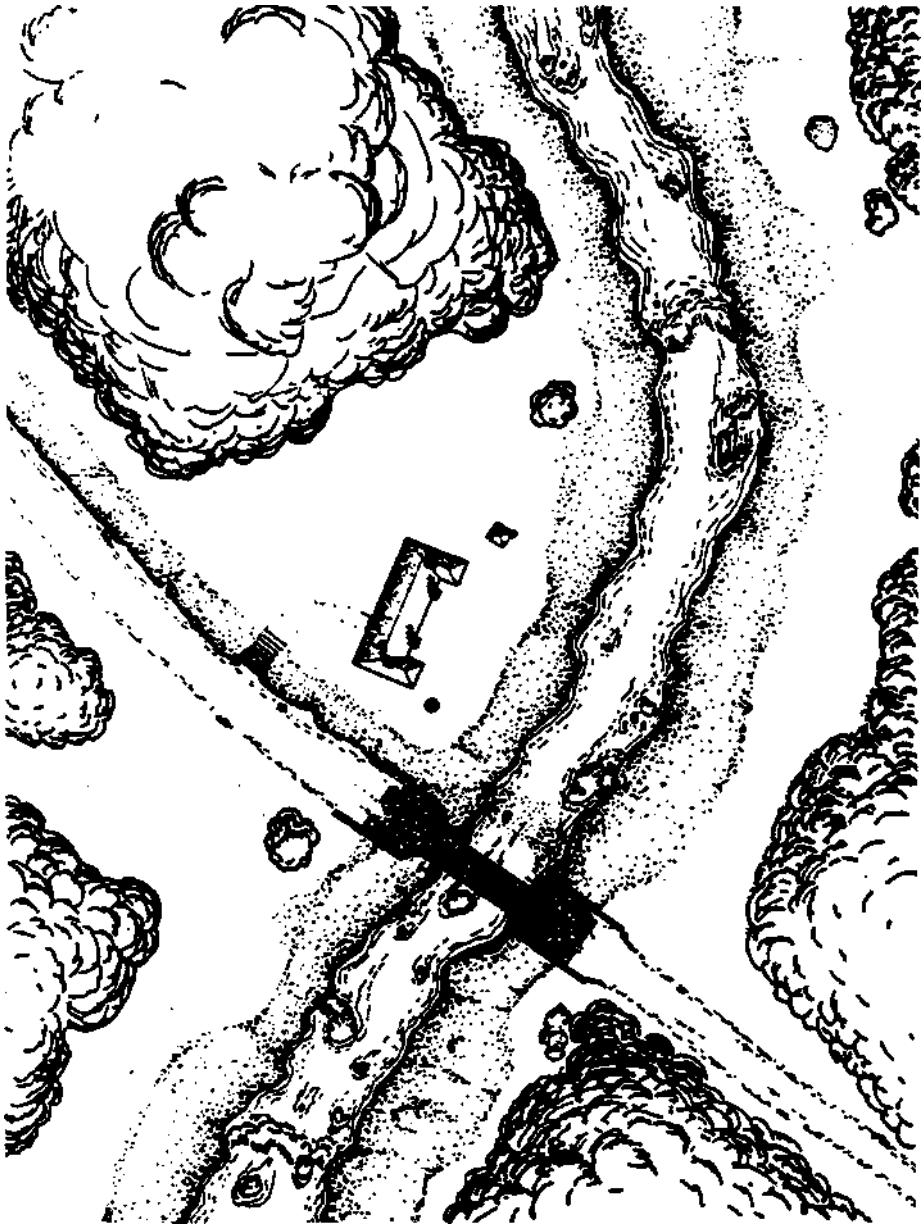
This unfortunate accident was quite unusual. The animal died from fatigue, for all nine had pushed their horses too hard in a desperate race for Sarn Ford. Ûvatha's comrade Khamûl helped him as far as the Mering Stream, but could not afford to tarry much longer as his own horse was also about to expire. A redevous point beside the Isen was arranged, and Ûvatha was left to fend for himself.

The Ringwraith quickly sensed the presence of the Trolls, and made himself known to them. They were stupid creatures indeed, but smart enough to obey him. While Ûvatha watched the road for a suitable black steed, the Trolls hunted for food and guarded their new, if temporary, master. In a short time, the Ringwraith had devised a plan to acquire a new mount.

Ûvatha espied the very traveler he required: a horse-trader on his way to Minas Tirith with seven fine Rohirric steeds. The traveler stabled his horses at the Inn of Greys and, later that night, Ûvatha and his newfound minions staged a raid, stealing two horses.

All was going smoothly until the raiders were spotted by the innkeeper's young son as he was emerging from the latrine. Ûvatha had the lad abducted as a suitable reward for the Trolls' loyalty Once out of sight of the inn, Ûvatha examined the newly acquired horses, allowing the Trolls to kill the one he found to be of no use and hiding the other in a nearby valley in preparation for his ride.





Riders of Rohan: SS; reprinted with permission from ICE

Unless events force an earlier departure, Ûvatha plans to leave the area at dawn on the 15th of the month. Should the player-characters fail to locate the innkeeper's missing son over the course of the preceding two days, Ûvatha will leave his hideout and ride like the wind for the Fords of Isen to rendezvous with his brethren (in which case, the adventure will be effectively over—at least as far as the Ringwraith is concerned). With Ûvatha gone, the characters will be able to attack the Troll-hole in relative safety, though Trolls are not the easiest of opponents.

Gnash-nash thought his luck had changed for the good until the frightening Dead-thing came. He knows that the Rider will only attract the Dúnedain—a choice between two evils—but there's no choice but to do what it says, though he'd like very much to get away from Ûvatha. Bognog his companion is extremely dim-witted (even for a Troll) and is content to attach himself to Gnash-nash and let him do the thinking. He isn't even frightened of Ûvatha and thinks that his bravado even impresses the creature—foolish thing! He's quite happy here, and his current pre-occupation is his expectation of making a hearty meal out of the innkeeper's son.

The Inn of Greys

The Inn of Greys is a favorite of travelers along the Great West Road, and tonight is no exception. The blustery autumn winds are setting in, bringing with them the rain and biting cold temperatures. This is the norm for this time of year, but for many the journey is one that cannot be avoided. Inside the common room, bleary-eyed travelers exchange glasses and make small-talk. Although early, it seems that for many the arctic cold outside is but a passing memory, and the evening is already merry. The ale taps are open, and a warm fire blazes in the hearth. A few quieter ones shiver by the fire.

"Built by three brothers in T.A. 2745, the Inn of Greys rests on a shelf of rock beside the Firien Wood Bridge. Here, the Great West Road crosses the Mering Stream, which forms the border between Rohan and Anórien. All around the three-story inn is the Firien Wood. A nearby stand of huge, peculiar grey oaks, once holy to the Drúgs of the forest, gives the Inn its name. Sixty feet below the Inn and the road, the stream tumbles over mossy rocks on its way toward the Mouths of the Entwash… Only comfortable rooms grace this well built, grey-stone structure (*Riders of Rohan*: 55)."

Acquainting the Characters

A good way to start the adventure is to encourage the player-characters to introduce themselves to one another. Depending on their temperament, the characters may be crouched around the fire, or seated at the bar or around a table—although they might avoid the bar, being relatively hard up! Once greetings are complete, they will have an opportunity to get their bearings and mingle with the other guests.

The other travelers are a varied bunch, and can be brought into contact with the characters as needed. On the whole, attention should be drawn to their carousing, drinking and laughter, so that the characters are encouraged to join in. It is important to keep the characters plied with drink and food, as well as highlighting the spirit of the room. Once the characters are very drunk, the way is open for embarrassing and potentially unfortunate events. Should an unprecedented combat develop, second to fifth level warrior stats should be used for the antagonists.

The Innkeeper and his Family

Léofric, the proprietor, will be the first to draw the characters into conversation with the other guests. He will stroll past them with a tray of drinks, his hearty cry of "Ale!" rising above the throng. "Here we are, sirs. My, you look a little bedraggled." He offers a chair. "Here, nestle down by the fire." Léofric is capable of a continuous stream of conversation, and will repeatedly question the characters about their journey, errand and well-being.

Although often mistaken for a Rohir because of his blond hair, Léofric is in fact of mixed Dúnadan descent. He has lived here with his family for many years and is always at home, despite the bustle. One thing Léofric can't abide is weapons. If any are openly displayed, he will ask that they be kept under the bar (where he keeps his club). Léofric himself has seen a good many fights in his time, and can handle himself if he needs to. He may be treated as a 5th level Warrior/Fighter.

The innkeeper's daughter, Léosine, may be of particular interest to male player-characters. She is a comely lass (Ap 87) and a bit of a flirt, being none too concerned about her father's presence. This aspect of her character should be used to the full to distract characters and prevent their venturing outside—and who would want to? In this respect, Léosine's presence is essential, because it will help prevent the characters from discovering and preventing the kidnapping of Léofric's son, Léorl, by Ûvatha and the Trolls.

Aris, Léofric's wife, will not be seen in the common room until after Léorl's abduction. Prior to that event, she will be around in back locking the stables, cleaning the floors, tidying rooms, or in the kitchen or cellar, and will be unavailable for more than momentary conversation. Not much will be seen of Léorl either. The characters might remember him as "the quiet, young one, seated in the corner all evening; not really sullen, just sober."

Léorl is a skinny youth, young but determined and hard-working. He is well-liked by his family, although customers find him a bit odd. He doesn't seem to enjoy drinking and dancing as much as they do, perhaps. Shortly after Léosine departs with her newfound friend, he too will depart.

The guests

Hansen, a local Brewer, is as drunk tonight on his own beer as his customers are. He is a balding man in his late thirties, and has a large paunch which he does nothing to hide. His main role is as a figure of fun—he cavorts about, upturns chairs, walks into doors, attacks the floor and makes uncalled for remarks. When he begins to wear a bit thin, he collapses into merciful unconsciousness.

Angris is a cartographer who has traveled from Minas Tirith in order to map the Great West Road, between Rohan and Mundburg. He is a young man with black hair and a short but equally black beard. He is putting the finishing touches to his map during the evening, and will drink only small amounts of beer early on in the evening. He is able to stay pretty much sober. After about two hours, Angris will pack up for the night (What work he has left can wait until the morning). He will then actively seek conversation with the characters, and will proudly display his Steward's Commission and nearly complete map. Angris is a 3rd level Bard.

Harlswine is the horse-trader whose steeds have fallen prey to Ûvatha. He was traveling to Minas Tirith with seven horses for the depleted cavalry battalions there. Rohirric horses are worth gold dust in these parts, and he is confidant of a good sell. Devious characters may consider stealing one of Harlswine's fine steeds (lesser war-horses); but be warned, they are guarded at all times by a servant (4th level warrior). Harswine won't let many people know this, so would-be thieves may get a nasty surprise.

Also in the common room are several regulars—local yokels with a penchant for haranguing, menacing, insulting, or even roughing up anyone who doesn't "give as good as they get"—ample opportunities for a brawl. On the other hand, anyone who leaves a good impression may gain their confidence and, perhaps, some rumors as well.

Breaking up the party

Shortly after dark, as the locals are beginning to filter home, Aris comes running into the room. She is a slightly chubby matron, and has reached her early forties. She shouts loudly across the room several times: "Léorl!" When there is no answer, she bangs on the table several times until there is quiet in the room. "Has anyone seem Léorl?" she asks. Some drunken reveler at the back continues to sing and Léofric throws him out, giving him a kick to help him on his way—his wife is obviously distraught. Everyone else watches him silently.

The first to leave the room is Harlswine, making some excuse about checking up on his horses. No one else moves. If the characters remain, then Léofric pronounces the bar closed, and the remaining Yokels

file out, leaving only the patrons who are staying for the night (or longer).

Shortly after this, Harlswine returns. Léofric stares at him accusingly—and everyone knows what the stare means. Harlswine is unperturbed, and he has a strange story to tell:

"The reason I just left the common room was to check up on my horses—as some of you may know, I am a horse-trader and was traveling to Minas Tirith. I say *was,* because two of my horses are missing, and the others are aggravated. My own servant whom I set to guard these beasts saw nothing, him having taken a rest in his room, reckoning that none of this crowd—pardon the language, kind sirs—were thieves. I am afraid he was wrong. One amongst us is a thief and a kidnapper."

Everyone will now be suspecting everyone else—of theft, abduction, or both. Harlswine will try to answer any questions as truthfully as he can, but the following warrant particular notice:

"Was the stable open?"

"No, the doors were forced open."

"Which horses were taken?"

"One grey, one black."

"When did you servant return to his room?"

"One hour ago (he says)."

The servant can provide one valuable piece of information. He passed a young man as he was returning from the stables, and saw him walking in the direction of the latrine hut. This last piece of information will not be revealed unless absolutely necessary, since the servant is now under suspicion of horse-theft and because he at any rate failed to guard the horses. Although smart characters might assume that Léorl himself took the horses, they don't know how wrong they would be!

Léofric has one final solution. He locks the door, tells everyone to go to their rooms, and prepares to sit up all night, waiting for his son's return.

Tying up loose ends

If anyone takes a trip outside to the latrine, they will find that the hut is undamaged, but outside the door there is evidence of a scuffle: a snag of cloth on the wood, which the proprietor will correctly identify as his son's. There is an area of deeply rutted mud around the stables, and a Hard (actually -40, due to poor light) perception roll will identify deep booted footprints. An absolute success will reveal two large taloned footprints, different enough only to be from two creatures of the same species.

One final dilemma with which the characters may have to cope is their state of drunkenness. Everyone—unless they took care not to drink at all—will be drunk. The question is, how drunk? Each player should roll 1D100 against their Constitution. If successful, they will suffer a penalty of 15 to all Ag, Ig, It, Pr, Em, Me, Re, and Sd based skills until they get a night's sleep. A failed roll increases this penalty to -25, and means that the character will awake the next morning with a splitting headache, suffering-10 to Ig, It, Em, Me, Re and Sd based skills for the remainder of that day.

Before we finally go to sleep, let's consider one final aspect of the evening. Rumors and gossip are omnipresent throughout the night and will persist straight through the morning after and beyond. They all but increase after Léorl goes missing—that is the way rumors occur. The twelve rumors (see table above) may be dropped into conversations at optimum times (Rumors 8 to 12 should only be used after Léorl vanishes.).

The morning after

When the characters get up the following morning, things will not be going too well. They may be suffering from a bad hangover, caused no doubt by the previous night's merrymaking. On top of this, they are all potential suspects—for kidnap or murder or horse-theft. Smart characters may already suspect the truth, and this morning will serve to confirm it (if they are quick enough!).

Most characters will want to take a look outside. As before, a Hard (-10) perception roll will reveal the booted footprints outside the stable, with absolute success revealing the two Trollish footprints (for that is indeed what they are). A second Hard (-10) perception roll will reveal that the booted footprints lead out of the stable yard and towards the road.

A tracking roll will be needed to follow the trail any further. This will be Very Hard (-20) because, in addition to the subsequent rain and poor weather throughout the night, the culprits have taken care to disguise their tracks. However, if a success is achieved, the trail will be found to follow the river for about a hundred yards, at which point the tracks vanish. If anyone thinks to cross the river and search the far bank they will find, about fifty yards further downstream, the body of the grey, trapped in some concealing reeds on the far bank. It has been partly eaten. A Light (+10) perception roll will reveal that whatever ate it was very large.

Planning ahead

These new discoveries will clear everyone's name and save a lot of time pursuing innocent revelers from the inn. It will also give characters the opportunity to equip themselves and plan a foray into the woods. There is only one other place where the characters might possibly collect information, and if this doesn't occur to them, have one of the NPC's suggest it.

This is the beacon tower which lies on a low foothill near the source of the Mering Stream: the Halifirien beacon, the seventh and last of Gondor which now marks the border with Rohan. As the characters approach the beacon tower, their first sight will be its crenellations towering sixty feet above the tree-tops. This is clearly a well fortified place, and must offer a commanding view of the area. A bend of the stream, and they are there.

To reach the beacon, the characters are advised to follow the stream until it becomes clearly visible through the trees. The irony of this is the very fact

Rumor Table

1. The roads are becoming more and more dangerous—I lost two guards during this journey to bandits. I don't know if I'll attempt the journey again unless I have to.
2. [Angris] The Drear Hills are not a good place—mark my words. All manner of fell things come from them, and mar the horse-lands. A real pity, but what do you expect of a place so close to the Great River.
3. My cousin Hal said he saw an elm tree walking up in the mountains. Hah! Sounds about as likely as the war!
4. Hmm, if it's horses you want, I'd try the Halifirien beacon—they always have horses there, but watch out, as things are they'd probably sooner shoot you.
5. [very drunken person] If I could do what I really wanted to, I'd build a cabin in the mountains—fish, keep bees and hunt boar.
6. If you find yourself venturing into the forest, keep half an eye on the stream—you can always follow to find your way back here.
7. Listen here; but listen well, for these things don't deserve to be said 'loud, like. I've stayed here a week now, and I've realised something I shouldn't—when I first arrived this place was silent with fear, for the Black Riders had passed that very day. Everyone was dumb-struck. Now, if I know the stories right there are Nine Wraiths, and one's not accounted for. Well, I expect that you can draw your own conclusions.
8. Léorl was always a quiet boy. It's quite possible that he did actually run away. But that would show a pretty devious mind, wouldn't it? And why would he take two horses?
9. I'll bet this tankard there's something we don't know about Harlswine—and I know I'll win.
10. Remember what I said about the Riders? The Wraith did this—I know. May the Valar save us! Ilúvatar's final hour is nigh!
11. Someone here did this—if only we knew who!
12. Serves the idiot right, I bet th'Trolls did it. Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Haaaa!

that in doing this they will be walking right above their quarry (see below). Not only are the soldiers at the beacon a good source of equipment, but they have some useful advice and are in any case interested in the elimination of the Trolls.

Halifirien is part of the most heavily wooded area of Rohan. However, both the Great West Road and the Mering Stream cut through here on their way to Minas Tirith and the Entwash respectively. There are numerous caves in the foothills, many of which are inhabited. Several Wose-tribes inhabit the mountains above, though they are also drought to inhabit the forest as well.

The rich flora and fauna that may be encountered within the Firien Wood is certainly worth comment. Wild Boar and Grey Wolves lurk in the deep forest, and Grass Cats are often seen close to the road, along with the deadly Green Asp on warm days. From the higher mountains, black, brown or blue bears often descend to search for the nests of ground bees, which are rich in honey. Trout can be found a plenty in the waters. Other animals include red and white foxes, and myriad birds. It is thought that there are Great Eagles in the higher mountains.

The Halifirien beacon

The Halifirien beacon is one of the signal-towers of Gondor that run along the northern flanks of the White Mountains. "The towers replaced earlier platforms, which were little more than open fireplaces. Tall, stone structures, the signal-towers were designed as watch-towers and way-stations, and had accommodation for small, resident garrisons. Fire cages crowned their roofs, permitting the watch-men a means of signaling the neighboring stations. Twenty-five miles apart, they could relay a fire-light distress call from Ostiras to Minas Tirith in less than one half hour (*Riders of Rohan*: 52)."

Halifirien is vital in the beacon chain, being the last of the beacon towers before Rohan. It was erected there in T.A. 2510, after Cirion the Steward removed the hallow of Elendil from its summit. In recent years, the Halifirien beacon has seen constant use, and is untouched by the decline of Gondor. Nevertheless, by order of the Stewards, the path leading to the beacon has for a long time been left untended with the result that it is extremely well hidden at both ends.

The tower is tall, and its hard-faced stone rises to a great height. Upon the battlements, appearing little larger than a pin, lounges a lone sentry. He doesn't appear to notice the characters for a while, but before they can call him, he turns and loudly demands their names and business. Any legitimate reason will have the guard scurrying downstairs.

After an agonizing wait of several minutes, he will appear and open a small iron-faced door in the tower's base. He is about thirty coal-haired and tired. He is an unfit middle aged man who came here for a quiet life and little else—not one of the famed Gondorian soldiers.

He and his three comrades have served at the beacon for a number of years, and are experienced—if aging—warriors. They use broadswords, daggers, long bows, and wear chainmail, greaves and shields. They are prepared to offer five gold crowns for substantial news of the Wraith. Though they obviously don't expect the characters to attempt to kill such a thing—*that* would be stupid!

One of the guards, Baramar, has traced the Trolls back to their lair and can give reasonably accurate directions, along with the following rough description:

"I traced the Trolls to their lair last week, but we were first aware of them three or four weeks ago. We don't really know where they came from, but my guess is the Emyn Muil, that real rough country. They appear to be quite intelligent, for they use the Black Speech; but what I find rather odd is that they are using a limestone river cave that's partially flooded, so they would have to go into the river to enter it.

"Our records state mat the cave was in fact utilized as a store-room of sorts by men from this garrison thirty years ago. The cave isn't far from here on foot. You need only follow the stream until it enters the forest. You will find it lying on the near bank."

If anyone asks about the Black Riders, the guards will be most forthcoming: "You've hit the nail on the head there. We were planning to raid the hole ourselves until thosc Rider-fellows turned up. You see, when we were little children, we were told tales about these things, and now the legend rides abroad. These Nazgûl are important news at the capital though, so we'd quite like to know a little more. It's a little frightening having one of these things on your doorstep!"

A good selection of quality weapons is available here from the armory. There is a 50% chance that any ordinary edged or missile weapon is available, and a 30% chance for any other ordinary weapon. The guards will only part with them for 1.5 times the norm, but are all of +5 quality (non-magical). Horses can be hired at a rate of 1 gp per week, but the deposit of a sword or some equivalent valuable is expected. There are three lesser war-horses (speed 180 ft/rnd, carry 350 lbs, riding skill bonus +15).

Where to now?

The characters have two options (or three, if they are planning on doing nothing at all and letting all the problems flow past them): 1) pressing on to the Troll-cave immediately, or 2) returning to the inn to check up on developments there. If they choose the latter, they will quickly hear that Léofric has put up a reward of five gold coins to be shared between anyone who rescues his son. The characters shouldn't need any more encouragement, but it you feel they need it, Angris or Harlswine may offer to accompany them, as may a soldier from the beacon tower.

Planning the attack

The characters are very unlikely to simply charge in and attack the hole in an open battle. They are going to want to use as much cunning and tactics as they can, especially if they have gathered what they are up against Some particular factors need looking-at in detail:

1. Timing. Will the attack occur by day or by night? It the attack occurs after ten at night, only a single Troll will be present (the other will be out looking for food), but Ûvathia will be found within his chambers. Some source of light (apart from the moon) will be required for a nocturnal foray.

2. Approach. Do the characters approach along the near bank, or do they approach from the other side, swimming or wading across the stream?

3. Equipment. Are the characters taking all their equipment, or will they travel light? Make sure you know exactly what each character brings along.

4. Communication. Once the characters approach the hole, silence will be essential. For this reason, they had better have worked out a good plan in advance. It they discuss plans during the approach, you may assume the Troll inside is aware of them.

The Troll-lair

The Troll-lair is hidden neatly under the bank, and cannot be seen from the near side of the river. Two innocuous holes are visible from the opposite bank, but little light actually penetrates into the hole. If characters have directions form Baramar, they should be able to identify the general location of the lair, but they may yet need to look around (The characters may have walked along this stretch of river a little earlier.).

The stream must be partly swum and partly waded in order to reach the holes, a Routine maneuver for unarmored characters (AT 1-4), Easy for those in soft learner (AT 5-8), Light for rigid leather (AT 9-12), Medium for chain (AT 13-16), and Extremely Hard for those in plate armor (AT 17-20). If made successfully, the character(s) may now attempt to enter the holes, which are roughly two to three feet in height and flooded to a depth of eighteen inches. While characters may enter simply by crawling, it will become pretty obvious that these entrances are far too small for the Trolls.

The main entrance used by the Trolls lies on the surface above the hole. If only they were a fraction more vigilant and informed, the beacon-guards could have shown it to the characters (having originally been made by men from Halifirien). Hidden beneath the woodland floor, this entrance is concealed by a small, rough log which is Hard (-10) to find if actively searched for. The hole is just wide enough for two people to descend at once, if a rope is used as well as the pitted ladder. It is only seven-and-a-half feet to the base of the ladder (see #8 below).

This cave of well-worked stone was once clean and wholesome, with fresh straw strewn on the floor and sweet-smelling air. In the few weeks that the

Trolls have occupied the cave, all this has changed. There is a foul reek in the air, the floors and walls are grimy, and bones litter the place. That is not to say that some areas aren't tidy (Several small chambers have been left relatively untouched.).

During daylight hours, both Bognog and Gnash-nash will be confined to the lair (Their exact positioning is up to you, but there is a 50% chance that at least one will be sleeping in area # 1. By night, there is a 20% chance that one of the Trolls will be in the lair, while the other is off hunting. It will be Very Hard (-30, due to poor light) to track this Troll. If both happen to be outside the hole, there's half a chance that one of them will be hidden.

Ûvatha, on the other hand, will be absent from the cave by day, observing the road. He is extremely skilled in the wild and cannot be tracked. By night, Ûvatha will be within his room, and there is a 25% chance that he will be snatching some form of meditative trance (He needs to rest for around four hours daily.). The rest of the time he will be relaxing in his chamber, the door to which will be closed and wedged from within. It can easily be forced, but this will wake him.

1. ENTRANCE. The mouth of the cave has an extremely low roof (between two and four feet) and is flooded to a depth of eighteen inches. Movement is either bent double or crawling. The water's edge is sandy and quite safe to walk on. The northern cavern contains a small raft, made of lashed timbers, but is extremely old and rotten. It is fastened to the cave wall by a rope, which is in turn attached to an iron ring embedded in the rock one foot up. This part of the cave is, in fact, actually quite clean and apparently untouched by the Trolls.

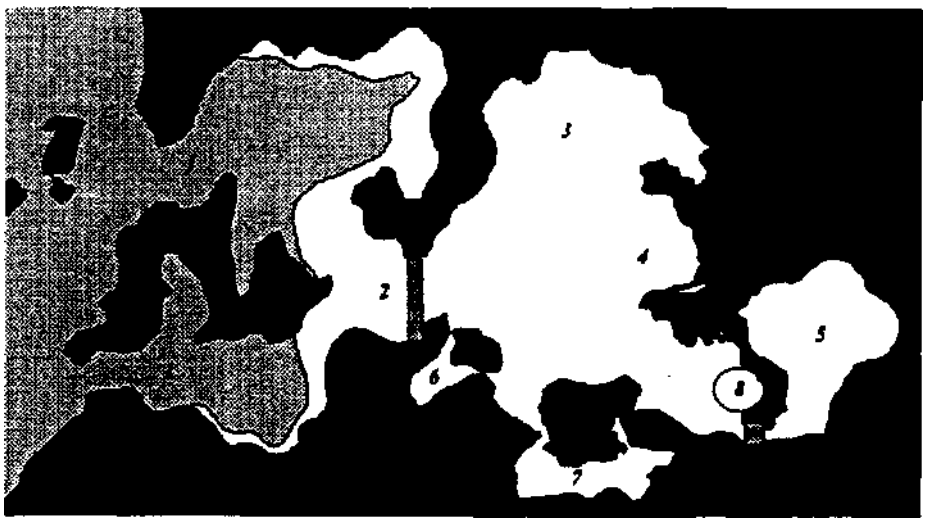
2. IRON DOOR. The door has been constructed of corroded iron, and although sagging on its hinges from age, it is stoutly barred from within. The door is approximately four inches thick. The bar is easily removed from location #4. On this side, however, a Very Hard (-20) General Static Maneuver (using Strength as the relevant bonus) is required. If the door is successfully opened, the sound will alert any inhabitants within.

3. TROLL LIVING AREA. This corner of the cavern has been taken over by the Trolls as a living and sleeping area, where before a plain bed had sheltered a member of the garrison during times of necessity. The floor is a disgusting mess—a mixture of rotting straw, grass, clothing and all the other grotesque mess that accompanies such creatures.

4. COOKING FIRE. The Trolls show their enormous endurance by placing their cooking fire in a poorly ventilated area, the ashes of which will still be warm from their latest meal. Scattered about the fire are various bones from their feast. Anyone who has seen such items before will recognize rabbit, sheep and bear bones. A clay jar contains a brown, sludge-like jelly.

5. NAZGÛL'S CHAMBER. The chamber roof increases to a height of ten feet. A Gondorian bed, table and small cupboard have been laid out here in some semblance of order. A torch has been bracketed on the wall and will be burning when the Nazgûl is near (Ûvatha prefers a little light.). A spare supply of torches lies neatly in one corner. Within the cupboard lies a bundle of hooded robes, and wrapped up in these are two Morgûl-knives (see below). While he is within the cavern, Ûvatha's lance will be propped against the way, his bow hung on a outcrop in the wall, and his helm placed neatly on the table.

6. TREASURE CHAMBER. The entrance to this room is blocked by a large rock. A combined Strength of 105 is required to roll it aside (The Trolls can do so unaided.). The treasure consists of a + 10 non-magical broadsword, a collection of assorted coins which, if counted, amount to 50 cp, 35 sp and 13 gp, a dark jar containing a yellow, honey-scented liquid. If imbibed, it will be found to be a potion of *True Armor* (*RM*) or *Heat Resistance* and *Cold Resistance* (*MERP*). Finally, the Troll's small collection includes a dead mouse and a locket left by one of the cave's previous inhabitants.



7. CAPTIVE AREA. This alcove also is sealed by a boulder requiring a combined Strength of 155 to shift (Both Trolls are needed.). Currently, the chamber contains only a single captive—Léorl—along with a number of moldering animal bones (although characters may know no better!). Léorl will not look too bad, given the brevity of his captivity. He is very grimy though, and could do with a good wash to remove the vicious Troll-odor. Before he can be freed, his arm and leg irons must first be removed (They have been hammered into the wall with pegs by the Trolls.). Their locks may be picked (each Hard at -10) or broken off by an edged weapon (Treat as a normal attack against a defensive bonus of 0, but with plate armor—any hit causing a D critical or greater will break one chain.). As his last chain is broken off, Léorl will cry out in relief, unable to stifle his joy, and characters hoping to escape must move fast lest evil ears may also hear the glad tidings.

8. LADDER. This leads to the concealed entrance which the Trolls habitually use.

AFTERMATH

Once cleansed of Trolls and Nazgûl, the soldiers at the beacon will immediately set to sealing the hole, and will take down full details of it for future reference, so that this kind of occurrence won't happen so easily again. Whether they take the characters' report as substantial evidence depends entirely on whether or not you want to annoy them by having the guards give them only three or four gold coins.

Unless he is further delayed by being robbed of his new mount, Ûvatha will have departed on the morning of the 15th. Read the following to the characters: "When you awake, you feel invigorated. Something inside you tells you that a lesser part of the Great Shadow has just departed. Even so, your heart is heavy, and you know that this can only signify a greater evil." The nature of that greater evil is left to the characters imaginations, but by noon, unless rescued, Léorl will be no more. The Trolls will have lunched well!

If Léorl has been rescued, the characters may now collect their rewards, thanks. If eaten, they can give his parents and sister their commiserations (E.g., "Well, I couldn't bring him back; but here's the brute that ate him."). If the characters returned to the inn, and Léofric offered them the reward, he will, true to his word, pay a successful party. His wife Aris will shower the characters with thanks and offer to treat any wounded characters (she is a 4th level Animist). Léosine will be more forward in her thanks. And finally, the characters get to take a hard-earned night's sleep!

NPC Profiles (*MERP* stats)

The Beacon-guards

Race: Dúnadan
Level: 5th
Hit Points: 90
Armor Type: CH/14
Def Bonus: +15
Shield: Yes
Greaves: Leg
Melee OB: +95 Broadsword
+60 Dagger
Missile OB: +65 Long Bow
General Skills: +45
Subterfuge: +15
Mov M/Speed: +15

Gnash-nash

Race: Hill Troll
Level: 10th
Hit Points: 175
Armor Type: RL/11
Def Bonus: +20
Shield: —
Greaves: —
Melee OB: +95 Large Bash
+85 Large Claw
+50 Club
Missile OB: +60 Rock (120' Large Crush)
General Skills: +15
Subterfuge: +10
Mov M/Speed: Medium

Bognog

Race: Hill Troll
Level: 8th
Hit Points: 190
Armor Type: RL/11
Defensive Bonus +15
Shield: —
Greaves: —
Melee OB: +100 Large Bash
+90 Large Claw
+30 Mace
Missile OB: +45 Rock (120' Large Crush)
General Skills: +10
Subterfuge: +5
Mov M/Speed: Slow

[Note: Hill Trolls are a variety of the dark creatures bred by Morgoth in mockery of the Ents, and they are as tough and stupid as the earth they were bred from. They invariably hate all other creatures, and will revert to stone in the light of day, for the Sun can unmake the spell of their creation. The Trolls are easily confused and will become quarrelsome if bemused. They are capable of conversing in Black Speech as well as a broken form of Westron.]

Ûvatha the horseman, the Ninth (see *Lords of Middle-earth II*: 96-98)

Born a Variag, few people are aware of Ûvatha's past, and those that are, are dead. Over the course of his "lifetime," Ûvatha has ruled Khand many times as King of the Variags, and shares in that people's cruel demeanor. As a wraith, Ûvatha's physical visage cannot normally be perceived, though he retains his native prowess. As a momento of his mortal life, Ûvatha garbs himself in black or dark grey with a red, kine-skin breastplate.

Race: Variag (Nazgûl)
Level: 31st
Hit Points: 180
Armor Type: SL/4
Defensive Bonus: +100
Shield: —
Greaves: —
Melee OB: +180 Mounted Lance
Missile OB: +240 Short Bow
General Skills: +40
Subterfuge: +50
Mov M/Speed: +25

Powers:

Any criticals scored against Ûvatha use the Large Creature Critical Table.

Non-magical weapons break on contact with the creature.

Drains 20 Con points per round on touch (RR versus 31st level).

Causes Fear at 6th level.

Has 31 PP and two Spell Lists: *Nature's Law* and *Sound/Light Ways* (*MERP*) or *Light's Way* and *Sound's Way* (*RM*) to 5th level.

Can throw knives up to double the normal range.

Inabilities:

Ûvatha cannot enter the Mering Stream.

His level and bonuses are halved by day.

Weapons and Armor:

Lance: +40 Horse-slaying. If set in a track made within 31 days, it gives a +40 tracking bonus.

Bow: + 20 short bow that strikes as a heavy crossbow. Neither the arrow's flight nor the archer's arm will be affected by the wind or weather.

Helm: +15 helmet shaped like a bat. Covers ears and neck. Gives wearer bat senses, including 2 x normal smell and radar sense.

Morgul Knife: +10 knife. Ûvatha will be loathe to use this.

Léorl

Léorl will initially be extremely grateful upon being released, but if it looks like he'll have to fight, things change. He has been extremely terrified by his captors and this should be made evident. Should he set eyes on Ûvatha again, he will instinctively shrink away.

Race: Rohir
Level: 4th
Hit Points:: 29 (in Troll-lair; his total is 43)
Armor Type: NO/1
Def Bonus: +15
Shield: —
Greaves: —
Melee OB: +63 any weapon
Missile OB: +24 any weapon
General Skills: +30
Subterfuge: +10
Mov M/Speed: +25

Buying Goods and Services

A variety of goods and services are available at the Inn of Greys—here's a quick list, together with full prices (numbers in parentheses indicate availability).

Beer and Ale, pint	2tp
Brandy, half-pint	15tp
Mead pint	5tp
Light Meal	9tp
Normal Meal	2cp
Normal Rations, I week, spoil, 18 lbs.	7cp
Lodging in Room (one to four person)	3cp
Private Suite	6cp
Stabling	3tp
+5 non-magical Broadsword (1)	30sp
Broadswords (2)	20sp
Clubs	2cp
Daggers (3)	6sp
Sling (1)	15bp
Spears (3)	30bp
Shield (1)	75bp
Water skin	1cp
Flint and Steel	2bp
Boots	3sp
Cloak	12bp
Sack	10cp

Tarma Tar-Calion revisited

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This article is not meant to be a comprehensive description of what my vision of Ar-Pharazôn 's monument is. It is instead a synopsis of my analysis of what Tolkien has written and how my researches have determined how I am incorporating the monument into my revision of the 1982 Umbar *module. Contained in the following article is a lot of arguing of position, a little history, and a brief physical (and very general) description of the monument itself.*

Introduction

A passage in Appendix A of *The Return of the King* identifies a monument in Umbar dedicated to Ar-Pharazôn and his victory over Sauron in the late Second Age. This is the only reference in any of Tolkien's works that mentions the monument and it is particularly notable because it provides a rare description of a physical structure in Umbar. In *OH* 5: 17-19, Chris Seeman wrote an excellent article about the monument, providing an interesting hypothesis about the history and nature of the monument based on a literal interpretation of the Appendix A passage. My view is that the passage is mythic in nature because the "facts" of the passage appear confused and at odds with other writings of Tolkien. As with all myths, kernels of true lie within them.

> The legends, histories, and lore to be found in the sources are very extensive. Only selections from them, in most places much abridged, are here presented. Their principle purpose is to illustrate the War of the Ring and its origins, and to fill up some of the gaps in the main story....Actual extracts from longer annals and tales are placed within quotation marks (*RotK*: 313).

> 'The loss of Umbar was grievous to Gondor, not only because the realm was diminished in the south and its hold upon the Men of Harad was loosened, but because it was there that Ar-Pharazôn the Golden, last King of Númenor, had landed and humbled the might of Sauron. Though great evil had come after, even the followers of Elendil remembered with pride the coming of the great host of Ar-Pharazôn out of the deeps of the Sea; and on the highest hill of the headland above the Haven they had set a great white pillar as a monument. It was crowned with a globe of crystal that took the rays of the Sun and of the Moon and shone like a bright star that could be seen in clear weather even on the coasts of Gondor or far out upon the western sea. So it stood, until after the second arising of Sauron, which now approached, Umbar fell under the domination of his servants, and the memorial of his humiliation was thrown down (*RotK*: 327-328).'

In a literal reading the monument passage, one major question arises. Why do the "followers of Elendil" "set a great white pillar as a monument," "on the highest hill of the headland above the Haven?" In the first sentence of the passage clearly states that Ar-Pharazôn "humbled the might of Sauron." Thus the monument must be dedicated to Ar-Pharazôn's personal victory over Sauron. Yet it makes little sense that the followers of Elendil would build the monument, despite the caveat "Though great evil had come after [the victory]."

Tolkien's description of Ar-Pharazôn and his actions prior to the capture of Sauron indicate his opposition to the Faithful. Upon the death of his father, Gimilkhâd, Ar-Pharazôn assumes the leadership of the King's Men faction in Númenor (*Sil*: 268). Though not explicitly stated anywhere, it can be inferred that the King's Men grow more distrustful and antagonistic towards the Faithful as Ar-Gimilzôr, grandfather of Ar-Pharazôn, is described as being "the greatest enemy of the Faithful" (*Sil:* 266) and Gimilkhâd, leader of the King's Men during the reign of Tar-Palantir, is described as being like his father in body and mind (*Sil*: 267).

Ar-Pharazôn leads a rebellion against Tar-Palantir, the last ruler of Númenor accounted among the Faithful, and upon Tar-Palantir's death seizes the throne (*RotK*: 316). He usurps the throne from Míriel, Tar-Palantir's heir, and forces her to marry him against her will, a marriage not allowed under Númenórean law (*Sil*: 268). Amandil, leader of the Faithful in Númenor, is described as being "dear" to Ar-Pharazôn and "in his council"—despite being "of the Elf-friends" (*Sil*: 270).

Thus one gets a picture of Ar-Pharazôn that is not likely to endear him to the Faithful. Additionally, it is highly unlikely that Ar-Pharazôn's later actions after being corrupted by Sauron would make the followers of Elendil any more likely to build a monument to him. The sacrifice of the Faithful to Morgoth and burning their bodies on the alters in the Temple to him would blacken the surviving Faithful memory of Ar-Pharazôn. Lastly, the monument described in Appendix A is very impressive and obviously quite noticeable. Tolkien makes no mention of any monument, much less one as grand as the one in Umbar, to Elendil and Gil-galad, both of whom, as the fallen leaders of the Last Alliance, would have been viewed as being more worthy than Ar-Pharazôn of being memorialized by the Faithful

for defeating Sauron. But if the Faithful did not build the monument in Umbar, who did? Ar-Pharazôn did!

Tolkien states that "The mightiest and proudest was Ar-Pharazôn the Golden of those that had wielded the Scepter of the Sea-Kings since the foundation of Númenor" (*Sil*: 268). The pride that Tolkien ascribes to Ar-Pharazôn is the same pride that would require he have built some monument to commemorate his victory over Sauron. In issuing his challenge to Ar-Pharazôn and Númenor, Sauron took the title "King of Men," to which Ar-Pharazôn's response was "the tide King of Men he himself would claim, and would compel Sauron to become his vassal and servant; for in his pride he deemed that no king should ever arise so mighty as to vie with the Heir of Eärendil (*Sil*: 269)."

Thus, upon defeating Sauron and taking him hostage, it would be expected that Ar-Pharazôn, as the now undisputed "King of Men," would then wish to commemorate his victory. While a monument in Númenor could be seen only Númenóreans, one located in Middle-earth could be seen by all men and thus all would know of the greatness of Ar-Pharazôn as the King of Men. Umbar, being both the landing point for Ar-Pharazôn's forces and the nearest Númenórean colony to the site of Sauron's "humbling" would be the logical place for such a monument. Sauron's former allies would be reminded of their leader's defeat while at the same time witnessing the might Númenor as embodied in her colony and Númenóreans dwelling there.

Why then does the Appendix A passage give honor to Ar-Pharazôn, yet claim that the monument was built by the followers of Elendil? As Chris Seeman noted in his article, the Appendix A passage was most probably composed during the rule of Steward Ecthelion (T.A. 29S9-2980). In T.A. 2951, Sauron finally revealed himself openly and in opposition to Gondor and, in T.A. 2954, Ithilien was completely abandoned. Gondor in the late Third Age is a weaker power man it was during the Last Alliance. Furthermore, aside from the Rohirrim, Gondor has no other allies to call upon to oppose Sauron.

It is not unlikely that the author of the passage, three millennia after the fact, might think favorably of Ar-Pharazôn prior to his corruption, for Sauron surrendered to him without a fight for the power of the Númenóreans was so great that Sauron "could not trust even his greatest servants to withstand them (*Sil*: 269)." If only Gondor were as powerful as Númenor under Ar-Pharazôn, Sauron would be defeated without a drop of Gondorian blood being shed. Instead, Gondor is faced with a long and bloody war that will not end until Sauron is destroyed (unlikely) or Gondor is (very likely).

In remembering Ar-Pharazôn's victory, the author was obviously reminded of the monument built in Umbar, but long since destroyed. In claiming that the followers of Elendil built the monument instead of Ar-Pharazôn, is the author revising history or has the author confused Ar-Pharazôn's monument with one built to commemorate Gondor's seizure of Umbar in T.A. 933?

Umbar: Haven of the Corsairs (1982)

Chris Seeman points out the discrepancy between the Appendix A passage and the cover and interior art of the 1982 *Umbar* module: a tower, crowned with a globe of crystal, is located on the island that divides the two harbors of the City of Umbar. Brenda Gates Spielman presents in her text the following version of the Appendix A passage.

> in T.A. 933 Eärnil I, nephew of Falastur, defeated Umbar and made it a fortress of Gondor. The Faithful built on the highest hill above the haven, a monument to commemorate Sauron's defeat, a great white tower topped with a globe of crystal which shown like a star under the light of the sun or of the moon so that it could be seen on the coasts of Gondor and far out in the western sea (Spielman, 1982: 10).

As Chris Seeman showed, Spielman remained true to the Appendix A passage with regard to who built the monument, however she describes the pillar as a great white tower. Also the tower is located on an island in the center of a harbor, not on a headland.

Taking this passage at face value, Eärnil had a monument built on the island in the City of Umbar's harbor. If there was another monument in Umbar built by Ar-Pharazôn, the two monuments could get confused over two thousand years by historians and other writers. The confusion could be heightened if the reason behind Eärnil's invasion was a resurgence of some evil associated with Sauron and upon destroying that evil, building a monument similar to Ar-Pharazôn's to commemorate his own victory.

The Two Towers

As might be expected from the arguments presented above, it is my position that there are *two* monuments existing in Umbar: one built by Ar-Pharazôn and the other by Eärnil. In writing my revision to the 1982 *Umbar* module, I have spent a considerable amount of time working on what I hope is a thorough and detailed history of Umbar. Included in this history is both a reason why Eärnil attacks Umbar and why he has a monument built there. (the building of Ar-Pharazôn's monument is also documented in the history).

At the time of Eärnil's attack in T.A. 933, Umbar was entering it's tenth year of a civil war between a resurgent cult of Melkor and the Captains of the Haven who had suppressed it since the sinking of Númenor. The cult holds the 1982 module's City of Umbar and has rebuilt the Temple of Melkor on the island in the harbor (the island was also the site of the original Temple in Umbar).

Eärnil attacks the Temple, destroying both it and its leadership. To safeguard the Temple ruins and to prevent them from being reoccupied, he has a tower built on them. This tower also serves as a monument to Eärnil's victory over the legacy of Sauron through the defeat of the cult of Melkor that Sauron had established among the Númenóreans. Ar-Pharazôn's monument, commemorating his own victory over Sauron in S.A. 3262, is located per the Appendix A passage, atop the highest hill of the headland above the Haven, which is to the west of the City of Umbar in the 1982 module.

Both monuments are towers; however, Eärnil's is smaller and much less prominent than that of Ar-Pharazôn's. Sitting atop a thousand foot tall headland, Ar-Pharazôn's Tower rises another seven hundred feet and is topped with a forty foot diameter spherical crystal that traps, stores, and magnifies the light from the Sun, Moon, and stars. From afar, such as aboard a ship sailing in the Nen Umbar, the tower appears to be a pillar crowned with a shining star. Among other purposes, the tower serves as an excellent lighthouse, guiding ships to the harbor of the City of Umbar. Eärnil's Tower is much shorter, rising a mere three hundred feet. The crystal sphere atop Eärnil's Tower is both smaller and significantly less magical than of Ar-Pharazôn's Tower.

The Destruction of the Towers

In T.A. 1810, Gondor recaptured Umbar; its victory, however, was limited to the lands immediately surrounding the Nen Umbar. Settlements along the Harnen and elsewhere in Harad remained under Umbarean control after being reinforced by military forces that retreated from Umbar. In T.A. 1940, these expatriate Umbareans attack and retake Umbar from Gondor. The momentous event that occurs in Umbar at this time is not the destruction of Ar-Pharazôn's Tower, as Chris Seeman proposed; instead, it was the alliance that the Captains of the Haven made with the cult of Melkor.

In exchange for their assistance and the Haradrim allies they could provide the cult, for the first time since the destruction of Númenor, would no longer be persecuted and could rebuild their Temple in the City of Umbar. Rather than destroying Eärnil's tower, they incorporate it into their rebuilt Temple, rededicating it to the cult's victory over the

Faithful. The shock to Gondor is that their rebel kin in Umbar, including relatives of the King of Gondor (*RotK*: 332) and descendants of Elendil, accept the accommodation with the cult of Melkor.

Ar-Pharazôn's monument does not fare so well as Eärnil's Tower. To Sauron, Ar-Pharazôn's monument is an affront and a reminder of the humiliation he suffered by having to surrender himself to Ar-Pharazôn. Yet, despite his eagerness, it takes Sauron and his agents several centuries to finally topple the tower, for Ar-Pharazôn's engineers used their finest skills in building the monument. Nothing less could or would be acceptable to Ar-Pharazôn, King of Men.

Additionally, the magical protections of the crystal globe had to be circumvented, for Sauron could not act directly against it, for it was upon the globe that he swore his oath to Ar-Pharazôn. The monument is damaged after a series of "natural" earthquakes induced by Sauron's servants. Finally, the monument fails, the top two thirds shearing off and falling into the Nen Umbar. The crystal globe is lost and not recovered until the Fourth Age.

COMMENTARY AND RESPONSE

Chris Seeman

Jason Beresford has given a well-thought out rejoinder to my article of last issue. As I have found to be the case in our past communications, whenever I dunk I have all of my bases covered on a particular point of Umbarean history, Jason manages to reopen Pandora's box of interpretation. There is nothing in the present article with which I would take issue; instead, I would like to offer a few reflections on some more general principles of interpreting Tolkien's writings for the purpose of game design.

J.R.R. Tolkien believed that fantasy literature should always strive to create the "inner consistency of reality" necessary to induce in the reader what he called "secondary belief;" that is, experiencing the invented world as though it were real. Being an accomplished story-teller (and many other tilings besides), Tolkien was able to create a world that admirably fulfilled his own criterion for good fantasy, particularly in the sphere of language.

One of the devices Tolkien used to narrate his "feigned history" of Middle-earth was to cast himself in the role of a compiler and translator of already existing documents, rather than as their author. Tolkien's disclaimer of authorship allowed him to distance himself, as a critical historian might, from the viewpoints expressed in the texts he had "discovered." Apart from acting as a "frame" for his narrative artistry, this disclaimer served the important practical function of enabling Tolkien to revise and alter what he had already written, without thereby breaking the spell of realism.

The most famous instance of this was the reworking of the "Riddles in the Dark" chapter in the second edition of *The Hobbit,* in which the significance of Gollum and the Ring are entirely changed in order to accommodate their new role in *The Lord of the Rings.* Tolkien accounted for the changes by attributing the original version to Bilbo's attempt to conceal what had actually happened. The integrity of Tolkien's own persona as scribe and reporter of history had been preserved in the face of outright tampering with his published text.

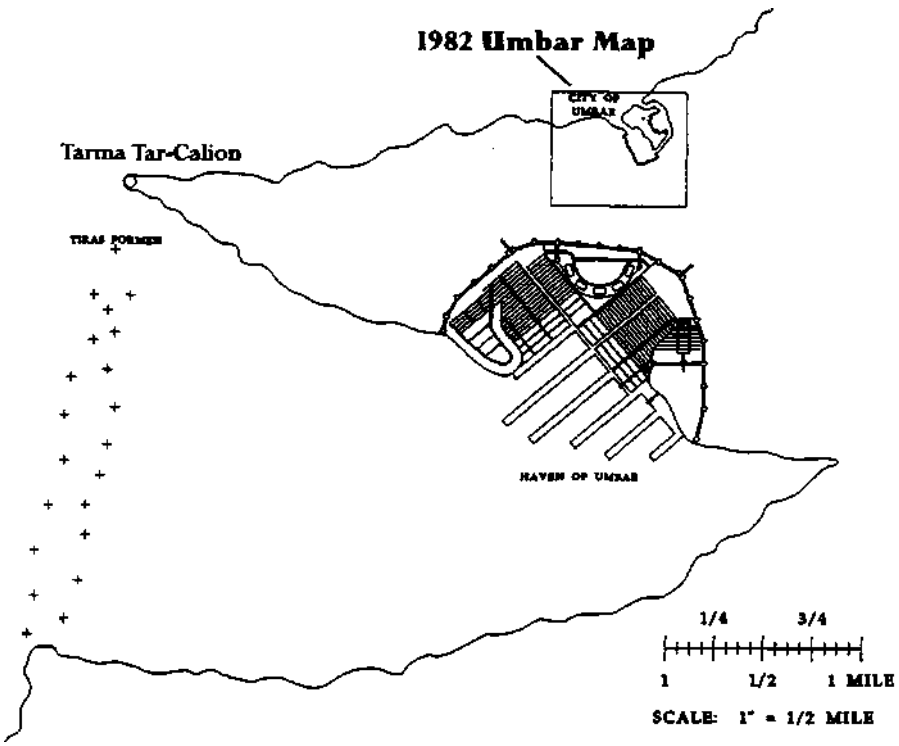
Another example of this principle is Tolkien's refusal to commit himself (even in his unpublished writings) to any one of the extant theories concerning the origin or Orcs. At other times, his implied authorial voice will adjudicate between conflicting accounts in his narrative, but this simply highlights my point that Tolkien conceived of many of the details (and even some of the important matters) of his world as being flexible and open to interpretation.

What this means for game designers like Jason and myself is that conscious alteration of Tolkien's world has a tradition within Tolkien's own authorial practice. Hence, such alteration may aspire to some kind of legitimacy, so long as it is carried out under the assumption that Tolkien's writings represent the finite (and at times fallible) viewpoints of those denizens of Middle-earth actually responsible for authoring them.

This does not mandate an automatic "free-for-all" for the game designer to inject his or her own version of Middle-earth into a module. And it emphatically does not allow an au--or to neglect what Tolkien has written; rather, it forces that writer to engage Tolkien's text with renewed attention and scrutiny (as Jason has with the Appendix A references to Umbar).

It is, in fact, much more commendable—both from the perspective of game design principles and with respect to the quality of the finished game supplement—to creatively alter Tolkien's text in order to make something new of it (as I have attempted to do in claiming that Queen Berúthiel was not childless), than to simply reiterate the given text and make nothing out of it (as Spielman did in her non-treatment of Tarma Tar-Calion in the 1982 *Umbar* module).

To be sure, all details of Tolkien's world are not equally amenable to change, certain elements being more essential than others. There is ultimately no objective means of adjudicating what is essential and what is not—certainly not by any generic criteria—since every designer's view of Middle-earth will be different. I, for instance, do not find the details of Jason's version of Tarma Tar-Calion objectionable, because both of our versions—one literalist, the other revisionist—agree upon (or allow for) what I believe to be the most essential aspect of the monument; namely, its significance as a symbol for securing or asserting political claims between the Dúnedain and the Haradrim (cf. *OH* 5: 18-19).



The Logistics of Minas Tirith

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Minas Tirith is a city planner's nightmare—a big city on a hill with seven concentric walls and a very small number of gates (The outer wall has only one gate through which all traffic in and out of the city must pass.), which creates a serious logistical problem. Due to the lack of primary source references, my reasoning in the following paragraphs is speculative, though it is based on sound historical and military facts.

If we assume that the city has approximately 50,000 inhabitants—a realistic figure, given the size of Gondor—and that each of these consume 6 lbs of food per day (excluding water, which is supplied by internal wells and rain cisterns), the city must daily receive 300,000 lbs (150 short tons) of food supplies.

There would obviously need to be a steady stream of wagons coming into the city from the Harlond docks and the Anórien and Lebennin roads. Assuming that one wagon can load 1,000 lbs of supplies, 300 wagons a day must reach the city, which makes approximately one every five minutes if the wagon traffic runs 24 hours a day.

However, it seems unlikely that wagons would be working during night due to the absence of proper artificial lighting. Instead, it is more realistic to assume that the tempo is one wagon every two minutes. The roads running to Minas Tirith would clearly need at least two (and preferably three or four) lanes in order to be able to deal with this amount of traffic. Four lanes would certainly be necessary for the Harlond road.

The layout of Minas Tirith prevents the use of large wagons in the city. Instead, the city porters must use smaller and more agile carts, perhaps something similar to a hand-drawn rickshaw, in order to navigate the numerous tunnels and tight street curves. In ancient Rome, transportation of goods was only allowed during the dark hours to prevent congestion of the streets during the day-time. Most likely there were similar regulations in Minas Tirith.

Outside the Great Gate there would have to be a reloading and storage depot where goods could be transferred from wagons to carts. The wagons would arrive by day to deposit goods there and, after sunset, the city porters would come with their carts to take the goods inside the walls. One consequence of this arrangement is that the city's bakeries and butcher shops should be located on the lowest level, preferably as close to the Great Gate as possible.

It might be possible to have hoists on top of the walls to alleviate the congestion, but this would only be practical at the outermost city level, where flour sacks could be lifted straight from a wagon over the city wall to the backyard of a bakery. Such devices are not mentioned in *The Return of the King,* but it is likely that the Steward would have ordered their removal when the war approached in any case.

Every morning, a swarm of servants would have to descend from the upper city levels to buy fresh food. If there were a day-time city food market (very likely), it would probably be located in an open field just outside the Great Gate so that the peasants would not have to enter the city to sell their wares. There should also be a similar fish market right next to Harlond. In addition to foodstuffs, there would also be deliveries of raw materials to city artisans and the problem of transporting their products to other parts of Gondor, creating additional traffic through the Great Gate.

A big fortified city of medieval Europe had numerous gates in its outermost wall just to be able to deal with the transportation of goods. Medieval Visby in Sweden (a town much smaller than Minas Tirith) had three gates that opened onto the adjacent farmlands and a big port. Minas Tirith's layout is clearly that of a fantasy world, making her an imposing beauty, though quite improbable.

Umbarean trade with Eriador: a neglected topic

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The people of Umbar are generally portrayed as either pirates and/or agents of Sauron, but little has been written about their role as principal maritime trading nation in Endor. This is a situation I am trying to rectify in my revision to the 1982 Umbar module.

In reading the recently published Arnor Realm module, I noticed that the only association of Umbar with Eriadoran trade is that the hostilities between Umbar and Gondor have disrupted the Gondorian sea trade with Tharbad. No mention is made of any trading with Umbar itself. This article, while not as detailed as what I am writing for the revised Umbar module, is intended to provide a brief summary of Umbarean trade activities in the region.

Trade ties between Umbar and the people of Eriador date from the first founding of Númenórean colonies in Middle-earth. As the Númenóreans became estranged from the Elves, that portion of Umbarean trade diminished, with lucrative trading relationships, except when the risks outweighed the potential gain.

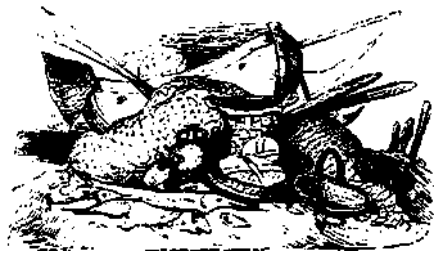
This situation continued well into the Third Age. Following the final Gondorian victory over Umbar in T.A. 1050, Gondorian trade links with Arnor and the nearby Dwarven and Elven communities reinforced existing ones between Umbar and the region. Castamir's defeat did little to change the Umbarean trade links since most of the principal Gondorian maritime traders sided with Castamir in the Kin-strife, and then fled to Umbar following his defeat.

Umbarean trade with the region essentially ceases when they lose their principal trading partners. Cardolan is depopulated, Arthedain falls to Angmar and Moria is abandoned. As Umbar falls under Sauron's influence, the limited trade with the Elves of Lindon and Dwarves of the Ered Luin is finally abandoned and all regular trade contact ceases Only sporadic independent trading ventures continue to visit the region for the rest of the Third Age.

As the War of the Ring nears, Umbarean traders visiting Eriador do act as agents of Sauron against Gondor and Rohan, supplying the Dunlendings and other "allies" with war materiel; however, Saruman's dominant position in the region far outstrips that of all Umbarean agents.

In the mid-Third Age, Umbarean trade is almost exclusively focused through Tharbad, and is principal trading partner (as measured by the value of goods exchanged) is Khazad-dûm. Cardolan has little to offer following it's fragmentation, and trade with Arthedain is limited due to the expense of land transport.

Umbarean merchants provide rare and exotic woods, herbs, spices, silks, precious substances not generally available in Eriador (such as perils), and manufactured/crafted goods from around the world. In return, they purchase Dwarven-made weaponry and armor, miscellaneous craft/manufactured goods, precious metals (gold and mithril), gemstones, exotic animals (such as chetmig, glutani, and bears) local herbs, local exotic woods, furs, Cardolani glassworks, Arthadan optics (their telescopes are accounted among the finest in all Endor) and (to fill out a cargo hold) Cardolani woolen goods.



A limited trade, both open and clandestine, is also conducted with Rhudaur, Angmar, and Dunland through agents in Tharbad. Umbarean ships also trade at Sudúri (aka: Mistelondë, Lond Gwathiló) and other river towns downstream of Tharbad as they travel to and from Tharbad along the Gwathiló.

A few Umbarean merchants regularly venture to ports other than Tharbad. Those with contacts among the Elves of Lindon dock at Mithlond, while those with contacts among the Dwarves of the Ered Luin dock at Caras Celairnen. The Umbarean contacts with both groups are ancient, dating from Númenórean trading activities prior to the founding of Umbar and are carefully maintained by the Umbarean merchants.

A small amount of trade with Arthedain and the Rivermen of Numeriador is funneled through Caras Celairnen. Goods exchanged in both ports are similar to those traded at Tharbad. For Arthedain, lower transport costs to Caras Celairnen allow for a higher volume of trade with Umbar than at Tharbad, however the total value of the goods exchanged is significantly less. Infrequently, Umbarean merchants visit the smaller ports of Eriador, such as Annon Baran and Cairc-faergus. The more exotic goods available at Tharbad, Mithlond, and Caras Celairnen are generally unavailable.

PRODUCT REVIEW

Wesley J. Frank

Arnor
(Realms of Middle-earth #2005)

Charlottesville, Virginia
Iron Crown Enterprises, 1994

With the publication of *Arnor,* ICE has gotten its new and revised "Realms" series off to a resoundingly solid start. This well-written and well-integrated module is a four hundred and sixteen page *tour de force* of all that we have come to expect of ICE's *MERP* supplements and more, encompassing as it does all of the previously published material focusing on Eriador during the Third Age, with significant expansions of several areas. Accompanying the text are a set of colored regional maps (which finally match, thanks to Pete Fenlon's deft cartography).

The scope of this module is an essential element in its overall coherence, as it treats the adjacent Dúnadan realms of Arthedain, Cardolan, and Rhudaur in the aftermath of the Great Plague (T.A. 1643). Given the intertwined nature of Eriadoran politics and society during this period, it is necessary that the entire region be taken as a unity. This makes not only for more in-depth module-writing, but also eliminates a good deal of the tiresome repetition and rehearsal in the previous modules, particularly as regards history and the description of peoples.

Other improvements in design and presentation also recommend the *Arnor* module. In keeping with the tradition of the *Northwestern Middle-earth Gazetteer* (cf. review in *OH* 3: 28-29), all descriptions of important sites, fortifications, and settlements have been organized alphabetically in *Gazetteer* format, allowing for easy reference. Another welcome change in the presentation of material is the relegation of the bulk of flora and fauna information to a series of compact appendices in the rear of the module, rendering them less intrusive to the presentation of other matters more directly apropos to realm description.

But *Arnor* is more than a lumped-together reprint of existing *MERP* modules. The revision author, Wesley J. Frank, has re-written and expanded upon many key topics, as well as adding on treatments of material absent from the earlier modules. Extensive new background information on the Rangers, the wandering Elven companies, and the Seers of Arthedain is provided, as are sections on magical defenses for fortifications and the "Banes of Angmar" (the latter referring to the natural and supernatural methods employed by the Witch-king to decimate the Dúnedain of the North).

Frank has also devised a very helpful chart for characterizing how the various peoples of Eriador react towards one another in non-combat situations. In addition to these expansions we are given the first real description of the Shire (newly-founded in T.A. 1601) and a synchronic exposé of the power-holders of the three Dúnadan realms and their relations among their peers (with plenty of spice for political intrigue and conspiracy scenarios). Frank has left few stones unturned.

Where they do exist, the weaknesses of this module are fairly trivial and do not mar its substance. Iron Crown's predilection for capitalizing non-proper names sometimes borders on bad English grammar, in addition to departing from Tolkien's own stylistics. Some of the internal artwork—notably the illustrations for the royalty and nobility of Arthedain, Rhudaur and Cardolan—is dissonant with the rest of the artwork and does not always seem appropriate to the feel of Tolkien's world (e.g., Dúnedain with comic book physiques, some with hands as large as their heads!). Finally, the maps of Bree, Archet and Combe (which originally appeared in the 1984 module, *Bree and the Barrow-downs)* are missing. Why they could not have been included in so comprehensive a module is a mystery, given their importance as one of the most ancient settlements in Eriador.

Arnor is a module whose size and depth of coverage enables Middle-earth to live and breathe in a way that its constituent predecessors could not. Portraying as it does a region familiar to the pages of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* in a time of war and dissolution, it communicates something approximating the feel of Tolkien's most popular works, and so is an apt exemplar of what a Middle-earth gaming supplement may aspire to.

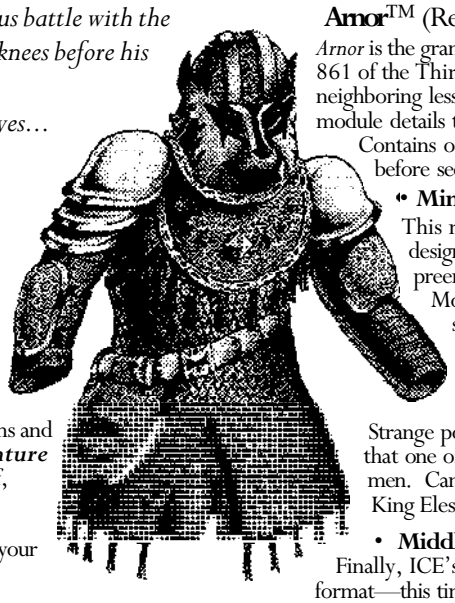
Reviewer: Chris Seeman

One Game to Rule Them All

... Torn and battered from a near disasterous battle with the great drake, Báin Ironbeard fell to his weary knees before his prize, the most revered of Khazad relics.

Báin breathed the words with tears in his eyes…

"Durin's armor!"



Treasures of Middle-earth™ (Sourcebook)

This 192 page sourcebook details the most powerful artifacts of Tolkien's world, including Aragorn's sword Andúril, the palantíri saved from drowned Númenor, and Sauron's One Ring. A revision of the 1989 version, *Treasures of Middle-earth* contains twice as many illustrations and complete stats for the ***Lord of the Rings Adventure Game™*** as well ***MERP*** and ***Rolemaster™*** stats. If, like Bilbo, you've ever felt "the love of beautiful things, made by hands and by cunning and by magic," then *Treasures of Middle-earth* belongs in your fantasy role-playing campaign.

Arnor™ (Realm)

Arnor is the grand beginning to the new *Realms of Middle-earth* series. In the year 861 of the Third Age, Arnor was sundered into the three independendent, neighboring lesser states of Arthedain, Cardolan, and Rhudaur. This realm module details the three sister kingdoms and their relations to one another. Contains out-of-print material on Athedain and Cardllolan and never before seen information concerning Rhudaur.

• **Minas Tirith™** (Citadel)

This revised version of the 1988 sourcebook documents the history, design, layout, garrison, and inhabitants of the Guarded City, preeminent symbol of the Free people's struggle against Sauron of Mordor. Contains a new city map—so large it requires two separate halves!

• **Palantír Quest™** (Adventures)

Step beyond the boundaries of the Third Age and into the adventure that lies waiting for you in the Fourth Age! Strange portents in the great Seeing-stone of Minas Tirith give promise that one of the lost Palantíri of the North has returned to the land of men. Can your adventurers find this legendary treasure and bring it to King Elessar? *Palantír Quest* is also usable with *Rolemaster™*.

• **Middle-earth Role Playing Poster Maps™**

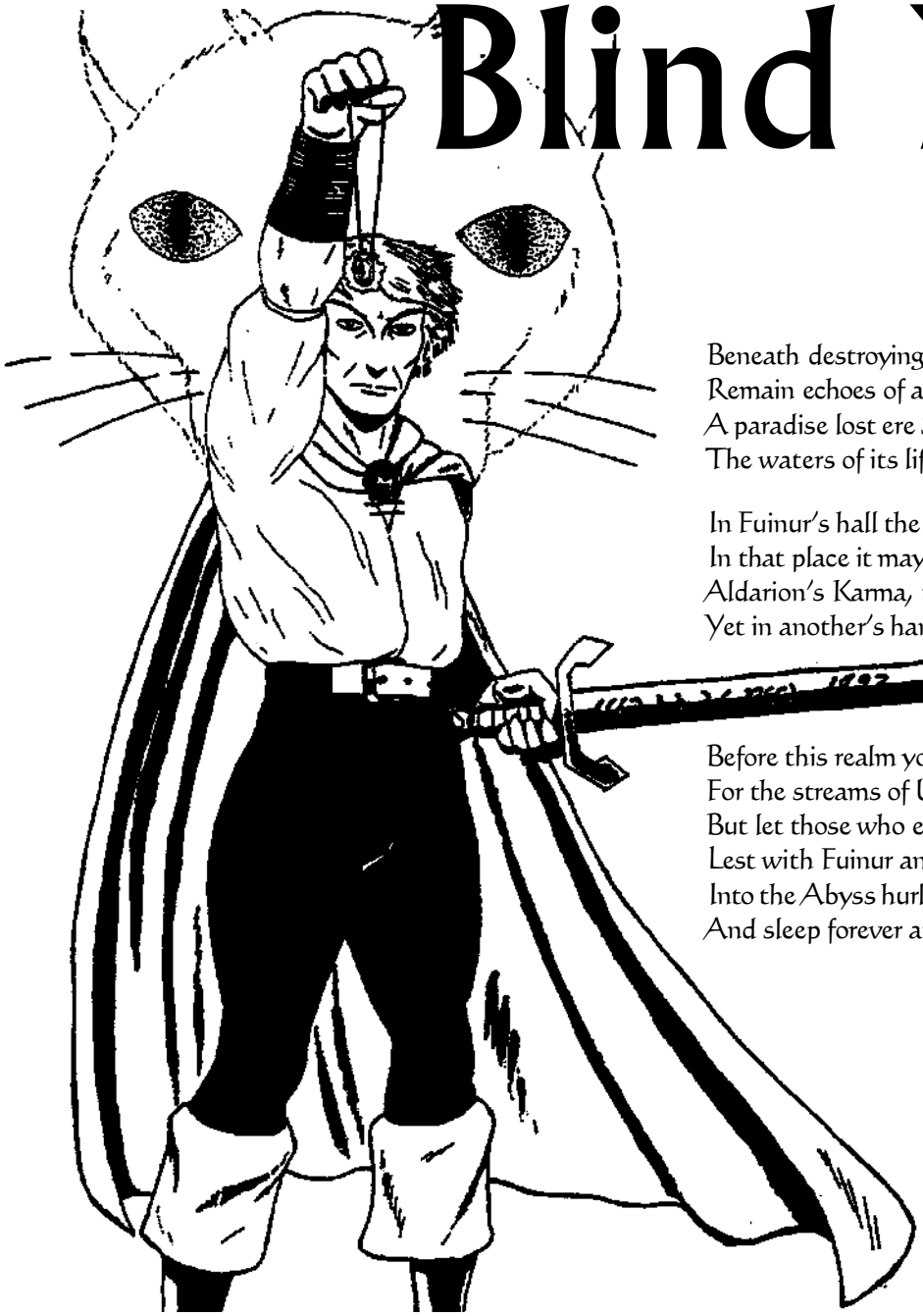
Finally, ICE's original map of Middle-earth is available again in poster format—this time without the grid overlay and printed on heavier paper! Also included in this packaged tube set is ICE's second major map, Northwestern Middle-earth. Both of these acclaimed maps are packaged in poster format—NO CREASES! A must for any Middle-earth gamer or enthusiast.

middle earth

OTHER HANDS

The International Journal for Middle-earth Gaming

Eyes of the Blind Night



Beneath destroying flames of Light overthrown
Remain echoes of a Spring to mortals unknown
A paradise lost ere Sun or Moon were born
The waters of its life run in secret veins by evil yet unshorn

In Fuinur's hall the fates of North and South are bound
In that place it may be found
Aldarion's Karma, the grace that binds
Yet in another's hands, of what will it become the Sign?

Before this realm you will find no Death
For the streams of Ulmo will be your breath
But let those who enter beware
Lest with Fuinur and his court they be ensnared
Into the Abyss hurled
And sleep forever at the navel of the World

Chris Seeman: PO Box 1213, Novate, CA 94948, USA

This adventure was first assembled in the summer of 1992 for play-testing at the annual gathering of the Oxford Tolkien Society on a lonely isle in the Bristol Channel. In its current form, it was conceived as support material for The Kin-strife *module, now in its final stage of preparation. In essence, it is a development and concretization of the views set form in the article "A Journey in the Dark" (*OH *3: 13-18), though the figure of Berúthiel appears only as part of its background.*

The adventure, set in Gondor just two years after the conclusion of the Kin-strife, turns upon the culmination of a Sauronic plot to destroy the royal house, and to install upon the throne a pretender secretly subject to the Dark Lord's will. It is written from the perspective of a group of player-characters attempting to uncover and hinder this design, a quest that will involve travel to settings as diverse as Orthanc, Pelargir, Umbar, and Far Harad. In their struggles to thwart the Necromancer's evil purposes, the characters will begin to unlock the mystery of Queen Berúthiel and her cats.

Considerations of space have necessitated compressing the extant material for the adventure. NPC stats have been omitted, and the encounters are often presented only in outline. As a consolation, I have tried to include as many illustrations and player-character handouts as I was able. These will hopefully compensate for the other absences by maintaining the atmosphere and texture of the game.

The plot

Much of the background for this adventure is already laid out in "The cult of Benish Armon" article in this issue, which covers the legacy of the Kuilëondo and Queen Berúthiel's lineage down through the beginning of the Usurper's reign (T.A. 1437-1447). This adventure resumes that tale as it might have developed by the year 1450, two years after the siege of Pelargir and the establishment of Umbar as an independent lordship by Castamir's family and followers.

A particular course of prior events is presumed by this adventure, events which might have turned out otherwise had the gamemaster already run a group of players through the adventures in the *Kin-strife* module pertaining to Benish Armon. In that case, much of the plot of this adventure may require some alteration, although certain aspects of it (notably Fuinur's Well) will retain their validity as they are.

The end of the Kin-strife

In the year 1447, at the Crossings of the River Erui, the rightful heir to the throne of Gondor slew Castamir the Usurper, ending a ten-year reign of tyranny. Castamir's followers fled before the host of the returning King Eldacar and shut themselves within the walls of Pelargir. A year-long siege ensued; but at the last, the rebels were forced to abandon the haven and withdraw with their fleets to the sanctuary of Umbar in the south. The true Kin-strife had only begun.

Eldacar had not sat long upon the throne when the rebels, led by Castamir's descendants, began ravaging the coasts of Gondor, reaping a bitter bounty for their reversal of fortune. The King had no hopes of retaking Umbar as long as the rebels held the power of the fleets, but neither could these corsairs hope to depose Eldacar while he had the friendship of the Northmen; for many of these had settled in Gondor at the King's invitation, thereby strengthening the divided power of the South-kingdom by land. By 1450, it has become clear to all in Gondor that a stalemate has been reached; but things look different to those in Umbar.

Stasis in Umbar

Although the rebels are at one in their cause to regain their homeland from the half-Northman Eldacar, they are by no means in agreement over the matter of leadership. Castamir's firstborn son and chosen heir Castaher assumed temporary leadership over his father's forces during the retreat to Umbar; but, after two years of exile, it is doubtful that they can hope for a swift recovery of the South-kingdom, and many of his captains are less content with Castaher's rule than with his father's. Matters were complicated when Castaher perished in a mysterious fire at his residence in Umbar.

A polarization of loyalties has taken place in the wake of Castaher's untimely demise. His younger brother Castarion is too weak-willed to hold the captains to his will, and has become a pawn for the strongest among them—the Usurper's cousin, Calimon, and Calimon's father Morlaen. These captains rally around the figure of Castarion in opposition to the Usurper's widow, Mûrabêth, who has assumed guardianship of her deceased son's wife, Lóthriel, whose hand is now coveted by many power-hungry captains.

A conspiracy

Castaher's death was orchestrated by an old enemy of the Usurper, who now consorts with dark forces in the hope of gaining dominion over Umbar and, ultimately, of Gondor. Morlaen and Calimon secretly conspire with their former enemy and his allies, oblivious to their own peril in unwittingly allowing themselves to be counted in league with a minion of the Dark Lord. Only Castaher's murderer knows the truth of the matter, but he has other plans.

Neithan

The Usurper's son was murdered by a man named Neithan (formerly Orodreth of Morthond and cousin to Castaher's wife). Neithan is the son of the last Prince of Morthond and therefore the direct blood-descendant of Queen Berúthiel and King Tarannon. Now under the tutelage of the sorcerer Zimrakhil (namesake to the Black Númenórean prophet of Berúthiel's time and ambassador to Umbar for the Southron Confederacy), Neithan prepares to meet what he believes is his destiny—the throne of Gondor.

In order for Neithan to attain the kingship in the wake of the Kin-strife, the existing royal house must either be annihilated or brought to the brink of dissolution. Through the agency of the Kuilëondo, which is currently in Zimrakhil's possession, this grim necessity may be effected.

The Tale of the Karma

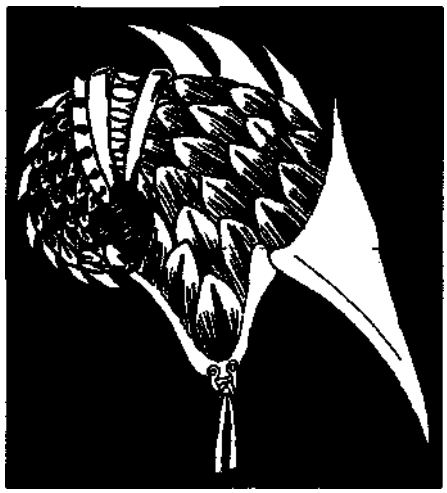
It came to pass on an evening of spring, when Aldarion was in Rómenna with his companion, Hallatan of Hyarrostar, that the two mariners were walking upon the quays. And looking out across the bay, it seemed to Aldarion that he espied a small islet which he had never seen before. He pointed his finger towards the rock and asked his companion if he had set eyes on it: for the friends had sailed the waters of that bay many times.

'I marvel that your keen eyes have not marked that place afore,' said Hallatan. And still more that you do not know its name; Tol Uinen it is called, and men say that it was raised by the Lady of the Waters when the Valar made this land. Mariners often go there to gain her favor, or to take counsel beside the pool that is said to lie there.'

Aldarion spoke. 'Verily I say to you Hallatan, my friend; if my eyes have not marked this place until now then I deem it to have been the will of the Lady herself, and that Uinen sends to me this night a sign. Let us make for the islet without delay.'

Then Aldarion and Hallatan took a boat and rowed out to the rock. And setting foot upon it, they came to a path of stone steps cut into its side which climbed to the height of Tol Uinen. where they found a pool of clear water.

The lights of heaven were mirrored upon its calm surface, and Vingilot shone brightly. Then Aldarion looked in wonder, for it seemed to him that he saw the image of a woman, whose dark hair lay spread through the waters of the pool. And she spoke to him with a voice like to the gentle currents of the open sea, when Ossë is at rest.



'Anardil Aldarion; hear now the voice of the sea that you love, for I am Uinen servant of Ulmo. The Valar do not plant desire to no purpose, nor does the Lady of the Waters. Those whom I call are those who love me; the unwilling do not hear my music.

'Behold! In the armour of Fate there is ever a rift, and in the walls of Doom a breach, until the full-making, which ye call the End. So it shall be while I endure, a secret voice that gainsayeth. and a light where darkness was decreed.

'So spoke the Lord of the Waters to Tuor your forefather at Vinyamar, where the waves of Belegaer washed upon the shores of Middle-earth, before all was drown beneath sundering seas. So he speaks now to you Aldarion, child of a new age, and I am his messenger.

'For many years have you laboured in the building of ships, and always you have sought out the friendship of the Eldar; and though you did these things freely out of desire, a time may come when your works will turn back the tides of doom. For this reason I have called you.

Then Aldarion spoke. 'I do not understand these things which the foreknowledge of divine race causes you to speak. Blessed Lady. But I hear your call, and come willingly to your summons. For if Men cannot presume to serve the Valar, they may perhaps arrogate themselves to seek the friendship of even the least of the Maiar. though Uinen of the Waters be far from the least of that great people.

The voice of Uinen answered. 'Alone of all Men you, Aldarion, shall have my friendship: and any who call you Captain will receive my grace in all their ways. As the heir of your father you will one day bear the Crown and Scepter of Elros Tar-Minyatur; but as the lover of Uinen you and your descendants will bear another token. Behold, a rift in the armour of Fate, a breach in the walls of Doom!'

Then it seemed to Aldarion that the waters of the pool began to ripple, and out of them was raised a helm of wondrous design. It was crafted in the likeness of a sea-crest, forged of pearl and encrusted with precious stones.

The Lady of the Waters spoke. 'Behold the Karma! Keep it well. Aldarion, for this thing is a mighty treasure from the deeps of Ulmo's realm; it will aid you and any to whom you choose to pass it on when you are in need.'

Aldarion took then the Karma into his hands and bowed in reverence towards the pool, and the image of Uinen faded into the water. For a long while he sat in silence upon the hill of Tol Uinen, barkening to the music of the waves upon the rock, wondering to himself what this gift portended for the future.

But more is required of the would-be pretender. Others will press their claims to the succession and another bloody civil war may threaten, unless Neithan produces some indisputable emblem of his worthiness that will outshine all contenders. The reincorporation of Umbar into the realm may play a part in these plans; but much more crucial will be the acquisition of a hallowed artifact of ancient Númenor—the Karma of Aldarion.

Fuinur's Well and the quest for the Karma

The Karma of Aldarion was passed down through the line of Imrazôr (Aldarion's descendant who founded the haven of the Faithful in Pelargir during the Second Age) until it was stolen by Fuinur when the latter fled with his brother to Umbar in S.A. 3320. From there it accompanied the expatriate Dúnadan to his eternal resting place beneath the Mirror of Fire in Haradwaith. Neithan is aware of the Karma's

location in Fuinur's Well, but he cannot pass the doors of Fuinur's watery domain until he obtains the key which opens its doors.

The key

The key to Fuinur's Well is a circular, metallic tablet of interwoven silver. It functions not only as a key proper, but also as a navigational device designed to guide the seeker through a deadly gauntlet of perils. Without it, the desolation of the Mirror of Fire cannot be crossed, and Fuinur's Well cannot be entered.

One further obstacle hinders Neithan's acquisition of the Karma: the key is fragmented into three separate pieces, only one of which is currently in his possession. He murdered Castaher to get it. The second fragment is in the keeping of Castaher's widow, Lóthriel, who is under Queen Mûrabêth's protection in Umbar. The third fragment lies hidden in a secret vault somewhere inside the Hall of the Faithful in Pelargir. Both must somehow be recovered in order for Neithan to fulfill his destiny.

The cats and the plot to destroy the royal house

Zimrakhil has contrived a means of drawing upon the power of Tevildo's thanes to eliminate Eldacar Vinitharya and all his household. In exchange for rendering this service, the sorcerer has promised the Prince of Cats release from his bondage to the Kuilëondo. The cult of Benish Armon, which was originally established by the cats as a cadre of human servants to aid them in their quest for freedom, was itself wiped out by the treacherous sorcerer's machinations during the time of the Kin-strife. Tevildo must now bargain directly with Sauron's emissary for his release.

Zimrakhil's plan for using the cats pivots on their current inability to assume *fana* (due to their subjection to the Kuilëondo). The sorcerer has learned the Ethir ritual of summoning the cats away from Benish Armon through blood sacrifice, and he believes that the palantíri would in a similar way possess the capacity to guide the cats' spirits to their royal targets in Gondor. Of course, in order to make use of the stones in this way, Zimrakhil must first manage to steal one of them—a presumptuous task, not to be taken lightly even by a sorcerer of Zimrakhil's powers.

The plot to steal the palantír

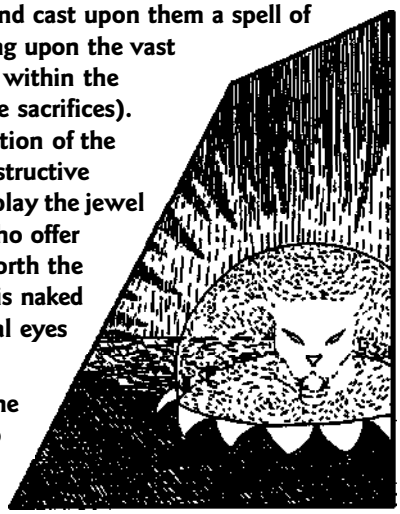
Although Neithan will not take part in the theft of the palantír, his erstwhile political allies will. Lord Morlaen, the senior conspirator, knows about Neithan's prior association with Benish Armon and, while he does not relish the thought of consorting with sorcerers and Maia-spirits, is nevertheless willing to lend his aid if Neithan's friends prove themselves able to eliminate the hated Northman upstart and his family from the throne. Neither Morlaen nor any his co-conspirators, of course, is even remotely aware of the Karma, or of Neithan's own claim to the throne. Instead, they view him as a tool for overturning Mûrabêth's power and for recovering the throne of Gondor for themselves.

With the loss of the Master-stone of Osgiliath in 1437, the South-kingdom holds only three of the lesser palantíri—two at Minas Anor and Minas Ithil, and one at Orthanc. It is only by virtue of Angrenost's peripheral location that Zimrakhil is able to conceive of carrying off the Orthanc-stone from what is arguably the strongest fortress in Middle-earth. Once in possession of the stone, Zimrakhil will have it brought to Benish Armon, from which Tevildo's thanes will be directed by the far-seeing palantír to strike at the King and his family.

In order to wrest the Orthanc-stone from its tower, however, Zimrakhil must first journey to the Gap of Calenardhon. The sorcerer will accompany Morlaen and Calimon on an ostensibly diplomatic mission to Tharbad, from which he will disembark with his brother and fellow namesake, Belphegor. From Tharbad, the two sorcerers will ride through Enedwaith to the Fords of Angren; and in the foothills of the Angrenost-vale they will await the night of the black moon (which falls on Loëndë).

On that night, Zimrakhil will draw upon the Kuilëondo's power to summon Nenduhir, the storm-spirit which the original Zimrakhil used to waylay Berethiel's ship in T.A. 830. This storm (unusual for mid-summer) will shroud the entire Gap—from Methedras to Aglarond—in impenetrable darkness. Which will make it impossible for the sister-stones of Ithil and Anor to view what takes place there.

On that same night, Zimrakhil and Belphegor will ride to the gates of Angrenost, and cast upon them a spell of destruction (again drawing upon the vast reservoir of power stored within the Kuilëondo by innumerable sacrifices). Following this demonstration of the Kuilëondo's awesome destructive power, Zimrakhil will display the jewel before the faces of any who offer them resistance, calling forth the Prince of Cats to reveal his naked visage which drives mortal eyes to madness.



Before proceeding to the spire of Orthanc, the two sorcerers will slay the Warden of Angrenost,

taking from him the key to the doors of Orthanc. Offering up the Warden's body as a blood-sacrifice, one of Tevildo's thanes will be summoned from Benish Armon to infest and slay Edrahil, the Keeper of the Orthanc-stone, while they proceed to annihilate the tower garrison with the horror of the White Face. Having obtained the stone, the sorcerers will mount their steeds and ride with the wings of the storm back to Tharbad, while the garrisons of Angrenost and Aglarond are yet consumed by darkness and confusion.

The raid on Pelargir and the summoning at Benish Armon

From Tharbad, Calimon will bring the sorcerers with palantír and Kuilëondo to Ethir Anduin, where the Corsair fleet gathers for a raid upon Pelargir. Zimrakhil intends to use this raid as a cloak for his attempt to obtain the second artifact necessary to effect Neithan's destiny—the third fragment of the key to Fuinur's Well, which Eärnil hid within the Hall of the Faithful. As the Corsairs retreat back down the Anduin following the raid, Calimon will bring the sorcerers to Benish Armon in the Ethir.

At the ruins of Benish Armon are found canopic jars which contain the physical remains of the *fana* worn by the cats prior to their subjection by Berúthiel (vital components to the ritual of their release). Belphegor remains here with these jars and the palantír, awaiting the next dark of the moon to initiate the attack on the King. Zimrakhil, however, returns to Umbar with the Kuilëondo and Tevildo's canopic jar (for the Prince of Cats himself can only be freed within the precincts of the Temple of Melkor, whose foundations lie beneath Eärnil's tower in Umbar). In addition, Belphegor will retain the Pelargir-fragment of the key to Fuinur's Well (as surety for Neithan's cooperation with their plan).

It is the intention of the sorcerer that Neithan should seek the final fragment of the key from his cousin Lóthriel in Umbar only after the success of the ritual at Benish Armon is confirmed with Belphegor's safe return. As the South-kingdom falls into chaos as a result of the King's infestation by the cats, Neithan will begin his journey to the Mirror of Fire in Haradwaith, to win for himself the Karma of Aldarion and so return to Gondor with the sign of salvation from its present confusion. This, at any rate, is the plan, not taking into account what obstacle the player-characters may pose to its completion.

The course of events

Although the player-characters may enter upon this adventure at any logical juncture, the progression of the plot is fairly linear—and will, in any case, be presented that way for convenience, assuming that the characters will begin at the beginning. The exact circumstances of the characters' involvement are left unspecified, though some of the settings may require that they be close enough to King Eldacar's counsel to warrant their direct involvement.

Perhaps the most convenient solution to getting the characters involved from the start is to have one of them play the royal seer of Minas Anor, who keeps watch over the palantír there. This will lend an immediacy to the communication breakdown with the Orthanc-stone and provide a strong motivation to get to the bottom of things—the security of the realm is at stake! The King will need to entrust the key of Orthanc to someone when he decides to send the player-characters to investigate the problem, so this person might as well be one of the characters.

In the *Kin-strife* module, the Warden of the Anor-stone is Lórin, son of Edrahil and cousin to Neithan, Estel, and Lóthriel. This would add a dimension of familial concern and tension to the already rather desperate situation. The gamemaster should feel free to conjure up social and/or emotional ties between the player-characters and the NPCs as he or she sees fit for generating the proper atmosphere for the game.

The opening scene (Loëndë)

The characters are gathered together at Minas Anor on mid-year's day for the Council of Gondor, which convenes during the King's annual sojourn in his summer capital. The King's arrival in Minas Anor is always seized upon as an occasion for important events, and this year is no exception. Prince Vidustain of far Rhovanion has journeyed to the Tower of the Sun to be confirmed in his patrimony by the King of Gondor. Vidustain is betrothed to Lady Terieth of Anórien, and their marriage is to be presided over by the King in one month's time at Amon Hen.

As is his custom, King Eldacar marks his arrival in Minas Anor with a lavish celebration, to be held in the gardens of the Houses of Healing in the sixth circle of the city. All of the player-characters will be present at this event, at which they will have the opportunity to acquaint themselves with each other and with other members of the King's court. If they are of high standing, the characters will be invited to enjoy the hospitality of the King's House in the seventh and uppermost circle of Minas Anor.

A cry of distress

At some point during that night, one or more of the characters (especially the royal seer, if he is being played) will happen past the chamber where the palantír is kept—the door, always securely locked, lies open. Inside, the Anor-stone rests on the floor of the room, tightly clutched by the arms of a young girl who lies shivering upon the stone floor, eyes wide with terror, oblivious to everything around her.

The young girl is Estel, daughter to the late Prince of Morthond (who perished in the Kin-strife). She has looked into the palantír, and is in shock. She is clad only in her night-gown, drenched in cold sweat. She cannot be revived unless touched by the healing hand of the King.

Any character who chooses to look into the stone (and is possessed of the requisite skill and royal mandate) may attempt to recall what vision the girl may have seen (though how Estel managed to get into the room in the first place is a mystery in itself). Any attempt to make contact with the Orthanc-stone wilt fail, and an area scan will be impossible under the darkness of night (the palantíri can only function by light).

When recalled from shock by the King, Estel will begin to whisper words not her own, as though repeating what she heard in her mind through the stone:

"Estel...I've called you....You have the Sight! You heard my call....Tell them—anyone—that we are under attack....We have shut the gates against them, but I fear it will not hold them....I can see them now! I can see their eyes....I have seen them in my dreams, and now they are come....They are here....[sudden gasp of fear, as Estel's body freezes, her breath labored, and then slowly relaxes, as though a burden were lifted from her]."

Estel will retain no conscious memory of how she entered the chamber of the palantír. Nor will she recall what she saw, save that she heard her uncle's voice speaking to her. Estel's only surviving uncle is Edrahil, Warden of the Orthanc-stone. Characters familiar with her family may deduce that "the Sight" refers to the True-sight of Númenor which the Maia Uinen grants to one member of each generation in Imrazôr's line (whose descendants have ruled Morthond and Belfalas from time immemorial). If Estel has received the Sight, it is a fair guess that someone has passed it on. Edrahil was known to have possessed it.

A vigil will be kept all night beside the stone, hoping for some reply from Orthanc—to no avail. When the light of morning enables the use of the palantír, it will be discovered that an ominous storm-cloud has wreathed the Gap of Calenardhon with an impenetrable canopy of shadow. No glimpse of either the Angrenost or Aglarond fortresses will be visible, though a search of the Great West Road running out of the Gap will reveal errand-riders making haste towards Anórien, bearing troubling tidings for the King.

The journey to Orthanc (1st-6th Cerveth)

Thinking it unwise to tarry in Minas Anor for the arrival of the errand-riders, Eldacar will decide upon an armed company to investigate the strange events at Orthanc. The leader of this company (preferably the royal seer) will be given the key to Orthanc, which will unlock its doors. A force of one hundred mounted soldiers will accompany any characters who choose to undertake this potentially dangerous mission for the King.

The company will encounter the errand-riders at the crossing of the Glánhir on the 3rd of Cerveth (the company will be riding hard, covering up to eighty miles in a day, with frequent stops to commandeer fresh horses). From the messengers they will receive news that the strange storm came upon them suddenly out of the Enedwaith on a seabourn wind; and that, soon after its arrival, the beacon of Orthanc was set ablaze, urgently signaling Aglarond for aid. Soon after the beacon's fire had been sighted, a violent tremor was felt from the earth, followed by a dread silence. Captain Harnastin, the commander of Aglarond, detailed a company to ride for Angrenost without delay.

The storm-cloud, still menacing but beginning to subside, will be seen by the characters by the fifth day of their ride, as they approach the Gap of Calenardhon. If they choose to lead their company to Aglarond first, they will be greeted with great anxiety by Captain Harnastin and his men. He will report that the circle of Angrenost has been breached by some nameless foe who is nowhere to be found, unless the enemy has shut himself within Orthanc itself.

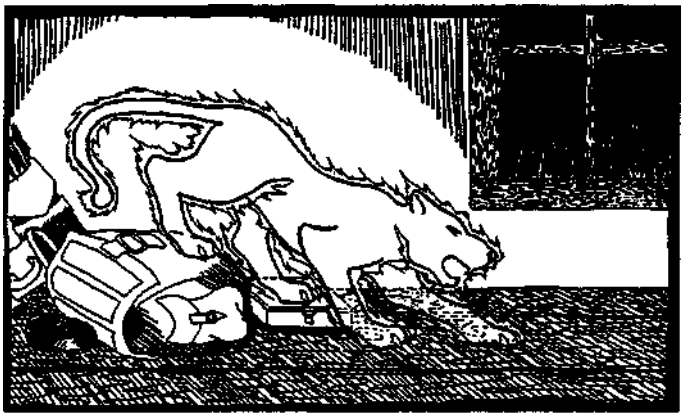
From Harnastin, the characters will learn that the distress beacon of Orthanc had been extinguished by the time his men had reached the gates of Angrenost. The gates had been torn off their hinges (most likely by the earthquake that had been earlier felt at Aglarond). The tower of Orthanc was shut, and neither light nor answering voice issued forth from any of its portals. But the Angrenost gate-guards were afflicted with some madness of which no cure could be found. Those that recovered could not (or, at any rate, would not) remember what had happened, save that they looked into a white face of terrible power.

A new guard has been set at the gates of Angrenost, and about the tower, but none of the patrols Harnastin sent to scour the lands about found any trace of a foe. Harnastin will be grateful for the troops sent to accompany them by the King, as his own men are too few to secure the breach of Angrenost, should it again be threatened. He will send a small escort to guide them to Angrenost.

The empty tower

The characters will be hailed at the entrance to Angrenost, whose twisted metal doors now rest against the wall-towers adjoining the gate. Harnastin's men have erected a temporary fortification wall around the open gateway of the ancient fortress. Here, the characters' escort will take their leave, turning the defense of Angrenost over to the King's company as the characters themselves press on to the tower of Orthanc itself.

The door to Orthanc is locked and can only be opened by its designated key. Inside there will be utter darkness and the stench of decaying flesh. Torch-light will reveal the corpses of the Orthanc garrison lying about the tower floor and stairwells, their pale faces contorted in nightmarish expressions of inhuman fear. Many will have their weapons drawn



and still in their clenched hands, yet neither cut nor bruise will be visible anywhere. There are forty-two dead in all.

Characters who enter the chamber of the palantír will find the stone missing; but in the corner of the room, crouched against the stone wall, will be found a stone effigy of what was once Edrahil, Warden of the Orthanc-stone. He is dead, but his flesh has begun to corrode into some horrible, statue-like substance. It is an unsettling sight.

The thing within

Still more unnerving will it prove to any character who chooses to touch Edrahil's remains. The incorporeal cat-thing still lies within him, now nearly finished feasting upon his life-force, and will stir if roused by the touch of a living being. Soon after Edrahil is touched, a glowing red aura will begin to form about his torso, and an ethereal shape will slowly emerge until fully visible to the characters. It will appear as a translucent feline creature of roughly bobcat-size.

Being far from Benish Armon and having now consumed its victim, the cat is effectively blind (though it will be able to sense the movement of nearby life-forces). Because the cat possesses no *fana*, it cannot be touched by physical objects (though it may be damaged by magical weapons). It realizes that it may be in a hostile environment, and will behave defensively towards whatever threats it may perceive, until it can make a break for a tower-window, whence it will streak away into the night, returning to the place of its binding.

If trapped and cornered, however, it will not hesitate to attack by entering the body of one of the characters and wreaking havoc on their life-force, causing damage each round to the person's *húle* until it feels its enemy wounded enough to escape. Although this will not cause any physical damage, the character will feel as though powerful claws were raking through their innards.

Edrahil's diary

The Warden had possessed the True-sight of Westernesse, granted to him by Uinen, which often gave him visions of the future (or amplified the divinatory powers of the stone). Anyone familiar with Edrahil (like the royal seer) will know that he kept a diary of such visions when they occurred. A search of Edrahil's personal quarters in Orthanc will produce this journal (Handout #1), the most recent entries of which appear to have some relationship to the mysterious events at the tower.

The aftermath of the tragedy

With a chain of inexplicable events behind them and no agents of malice in sight, the characters will be burdened with the reordering of affairs at Angrenost and Orthanc. A mass burial must be prepared for the slain soldiers of the garrison, and messages must be relayed to the King at Minas Anor, arranging for the mustering of troops to re-garrison the fortress.

29 Nórui

At Arien's rising the Sight came to me. I stand on a rocky, windswept shore—the roar of the surf, the sting of salt upon my face, the harsh cries of gulls. The resounding thud of hooves on the beach, the snorts and whinnies of horses, the footsteps of men dismounting.

They gather around the shape of a woman, lying face down upon the beach—her fingers sunk deep into the wet sand. She is breathing—I can hear her labored heartbeat. The hands of a healer reach out, recalling her from the memory of dark waters.

30 Nórui

At Arien's soaring the Sight came to me. I stand alone in a barren house, empty and abandoned. Beneath its stone arches the sleepy waters of a great river wander. She was here once, but now has departed. She was not alone, but the burden she bore was hers alone. A sad tale, but its end lies elsewhere.

31 Nórui

At Arien's setting the Sight came to me. I stand in the house of the King—the time is before the war, for the Dome of Stars still stands. The red light of the setting sun strikes the Tower of the Dome, kindling it's silver roof like flame.

I hear the dancing water of a fountain—I stand in a garden courtyard. She was here once, beneath the eaves of yew and cypress, but now has departed. Tormented sculptures encircle me—the faces of men once living, the faces of men I once knew.

They know in themselves the corruption of Death—and yet multiplied, concentrated into the agony of a thousand years. They know her pain, though not by choice. Her memory lives on, but the memory of Men is not wholly shut in books. An infant cries.

Loënde

At Arien's dying the Sight came to me. It is dark—a blind night—but a fire burns beneath a tower. A jar stands beside an alter of stone, a red jewel lies covered in blood—the jar is opened. Now they are all come, nine and one. A storm approaches.

Lady of the Waters, preserve us in our paths
Blessed Uinen, defend us from the storm and what it hides
Remember the Sign of your covenant
The Karma that heals, the curse repealed

Handout # 1 : Edrahil's Visions

The theft of the palantír is a serious matter, but equally grave is the death of Edrahil, a man of high lineage (and, perhaps, a blood relation to some of the characters). A search for the lost stone must be organized, but first Edrahil's body must be embalmed and prepared for burial on the island of Tolfalas, where the line of Imrazôr keeps its hallows. Prince Aradan of Belfalas will arrange for a ship to meet them at Tharbad, so that Edrahil's body may be borne to its final resting place with all haste. He will ask that the characters accompany the body (if they are not already planning on doing so).

Journey to Tharbad (8-20 Cerveth)

The road from the Gap of Calenardhon to Tharbad will be uneventful. The characters will have an escort from Aglarond, which will dispel any danger to their safety that Enedwaith might hold. At Tharbad, they will be received with honor by a show of dignitaries, among them Prince Argeleb of Arthedain.

Although the Prince's father, King Araphor, lacks the means to enforce his royal prerogatives in Cardolan, the men of Arthedain nevertheless hold a strong interest in Tharbad, as it is their principal life-line to outside aid in time of war. As his father's emissary, Argeleb does his utmost to maintain good relations with the confederates in Umbar, who had given Arthedain great material and financial support during the Usurper's reign in Gondor.

This complicates matters in Tharbad, since the confederates are now considered to be outlaws and rebels by the returned King Eldacar. Lord Morlaen of Umbar has come to Tharbad to meet with Prince Argeleb and Eldacar's legate, Ciramir, in order to discuss the terms on which Arthedain may expect to avoid Gondorian interference in Tharbad while continuing to engage in friendly relations with Umbar. When the characters arrive in Tharbad with Edrahil's body, these negotiations will still be in progress, and for an evening at least the characters will be staying under the same roof as one of the chief movers of the plot to steal the palantír.

Ciramir, Prince Argeleb, Prince Aradan, and Lord Morlaen will all be present when the characters enter the gates of Tharbad—present political differences are momentarily suspended as all of these Dúnadan lords gather to pay their respects to Edrahil as a revered scion of the lineage of Imrazôr. Ciramir will insist that they accept his hospitality for the night. All present will be invited to a private dinner with the Gondorian legate to honor Edrahil's memory.

In the course of their dinner, the characters will have ample opportunity to discuss the events at Orthanc (which Morlaen will be highly interested in hearing about, though he will make a pretense of neutrality). If conversation shifts to the diplomatic proceedings underway, the characters may learn of Calimon's earlier presence in Tharbad (he departed two weeks before the characters arrived with Zimrakhil and Belphegor with the palantír, bound for Ethir Anduin). The point of this encounter is to enable the characters to get a close look at Morlaen before they are aware that he is a villain.

If the characters show Edrahil's diary to Aradan, he will be able to recount what is generally known about the Karma of Aldarion—of its placement in the Hall of the Faithful, of its theft by Fuinur and Herumor, and of its disappearance along with Fuinur following the latter's flight from the Battle of Dagorlad in the War of the Last Alliance. Aradan will suggest that the characters look to Parmandil, the loremaster who will be presiding over the burial ceremony on Tolfalas, for more information.

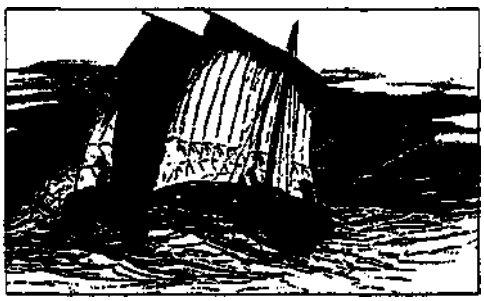
Aradan has brought with him embalmers from Belfalas, skilled in the art of funerary preparation. Edrahil's body must be properly prepared (to the extent that this is possible, given the unnatural aspect of his demise) for burial before the ship leaves for Tolfalas. This process will take a full day to complete, which means that the characters will not leave Tharbad until the 22nd of the month.

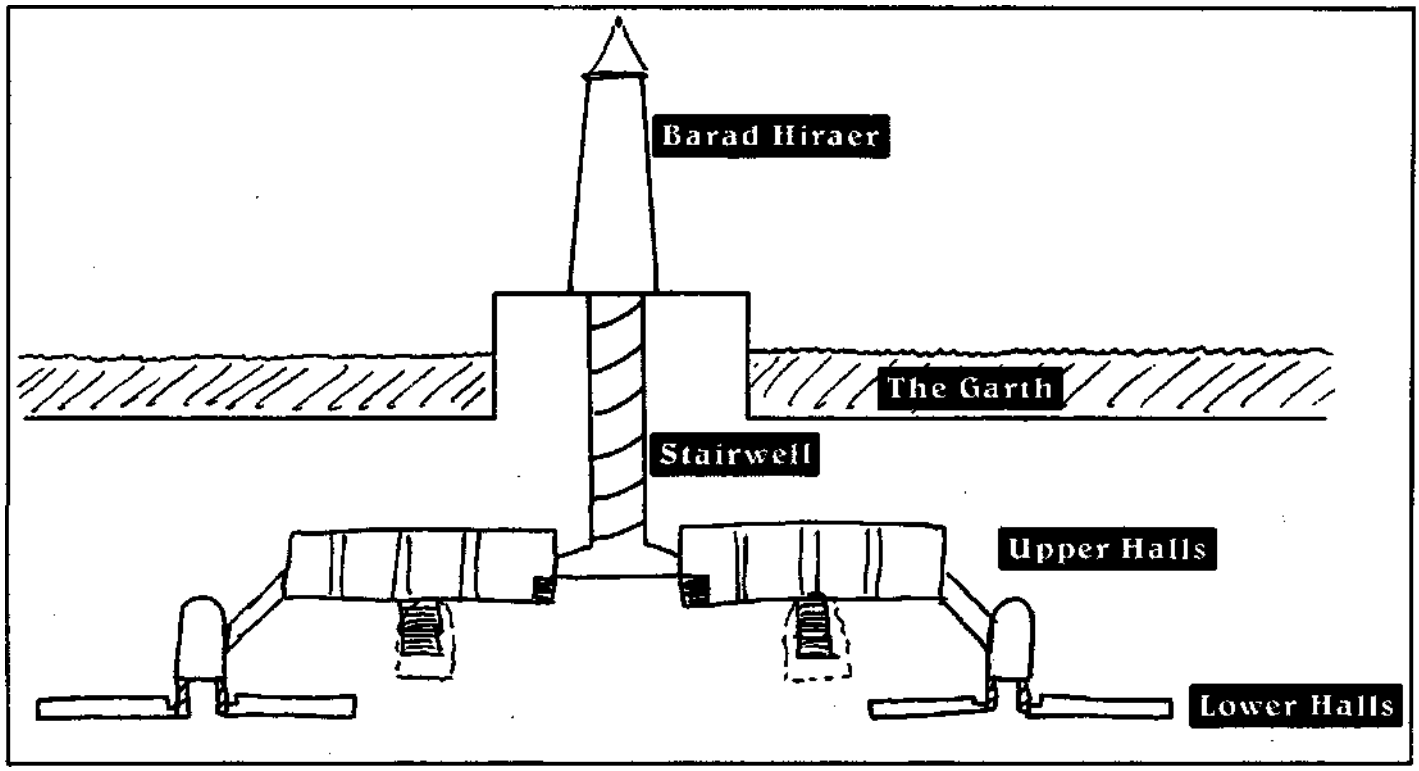
Voyage to Tolfalas (22-27 Cerveth)

The journey from Tharbad to Tolfalas will be peaceful and uninterrupted, and Aradan's ship will arrive at Nenmárros Bay amid an even greater throng of dignitaries gathered before the Hallow of Imrazôr there. Eldacar's eldest son. Prince Aldamir, will be present, as will Parmandil, chief loremaster from the Hall of the Faithful in Pelargir. Parmandil will read some words of dedication, which conclude with a chanting of the prayer to Uinen which Edrahil recorded in his final vision:

> "Dear friends, sojourners in exile, we are gathered here today, to this place that is sacred to the Lady of the Waters, to bid our farewell to a great man. Edrahil, son of Tirkhôr of Belfalas, now joins his forefathers of the line of Edhelion, in this hallow that Imrazôr the Númenórean built many years ago. Dear friends, sojourners in exile, know that Death is not a curse, but the Gift of Ilúvatar to Men. Death may corrupt even the body; but we, the Secondborn, are not bound to this body in death, for beyond the Circles of the World there is more than memory. *Lady of the Waters, preserve us in our paths. Blessed Uinen, defend us from the storm and what it hides. Remember the Sign of your covenant. The Karma that heals, the curse repealed."*

If questioned about the prayer, Parmandil will recount to the characters that it was a hymn to Uinen, which—it is said—Eärnil, the thirteenth king of Gondor, composed just prior to his death at sea in the year 936. It is an obscure prayer, though the characters might be able to learn more of it if they returned with Parmandil to the Hall of the Faithful. As Edrahil's visions are their only lead, the characters had best take Parmandil's advice.





The Hall of the Faithful (27-29 Cerveth)

The characters may accompany Parmandil, who will be traveling with Prince Aldamir on his way back to Pelargir. This brief voyage will take them through the Western Straight of Tolfalas to the Mouths of Anduin (where Calimon and Zimrakhil ready the Corsair fleet in hiding). From thence they will pass on upriver to the haven of Pelargir.

The Hall of the Faithful is the largest repository of Númenórean lore in Gondor (and perhaps in all of Middle-earth). In 1450, the Hall lies beneath the foundations of the tower that King Eärnil built in the center Pelargir's newly-constructed harbor in T.A. 923 (This was the sister of the tower which the King later built in Umbar over the ruins of the Temple of Melkor ten years later.).

It was Imrazôr who first discovered the grottos that the power of Ulmo had delved into the solid rock of the Sirith-Anduin promontory, but it was Imrazôr's son Veantur, who completed the construction of the haven, who actually expanded these grottos into a nigh impregnable fastness, wherein could be preserved the lore and memory of the homeland of the Faithful. The Karma of Aldarion was set in the innermost vault of this sanctuary, to protect it from harm. But since the theft of the Karma by Fuinur and Herumor in S.A. 3320, the Hall has been robbed of this divine protection.

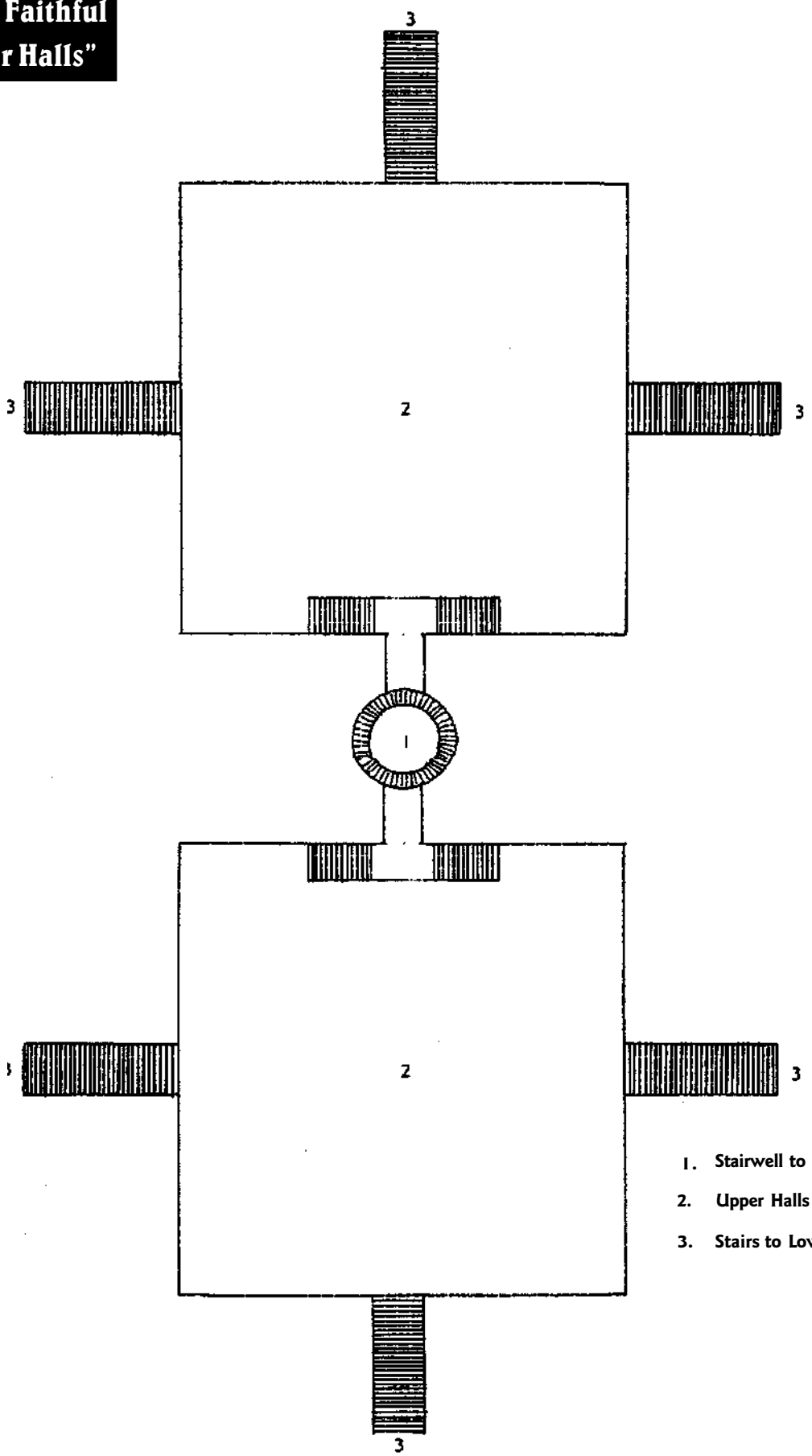
No weapons may be borne within the sacred precincts of the Hall. After seeing to it that their gear is tended to, Parmandil will lead the characters down into the Hall, bringing them to the empty vault of the Karma. It is a simple, octagonal chamber with a stone pedestal at its center (which once held the Karma). On the ceiling above the pedestal is a representation of Uinen bestowing the Karma upon Aldarion, carved into the rock.

Parmandil will call for one of his scribes, Aramis, to fetch for him the *Annals of the Kings* (Handout #2), which details the circumstances leading to his succession to the kingship, his war with Umbar, and his untimely death.

In addition to the *Annals*, Parmandil will show them the fragment which contained the text of Eärnil's prayer (Handout #3). The loremaster will point out that, although the prayer itself is fairly well-known, the original document from which it was purportedly derived has never been located (though there was never any great search devoted to finding it, since there was never a pressing need—until now).

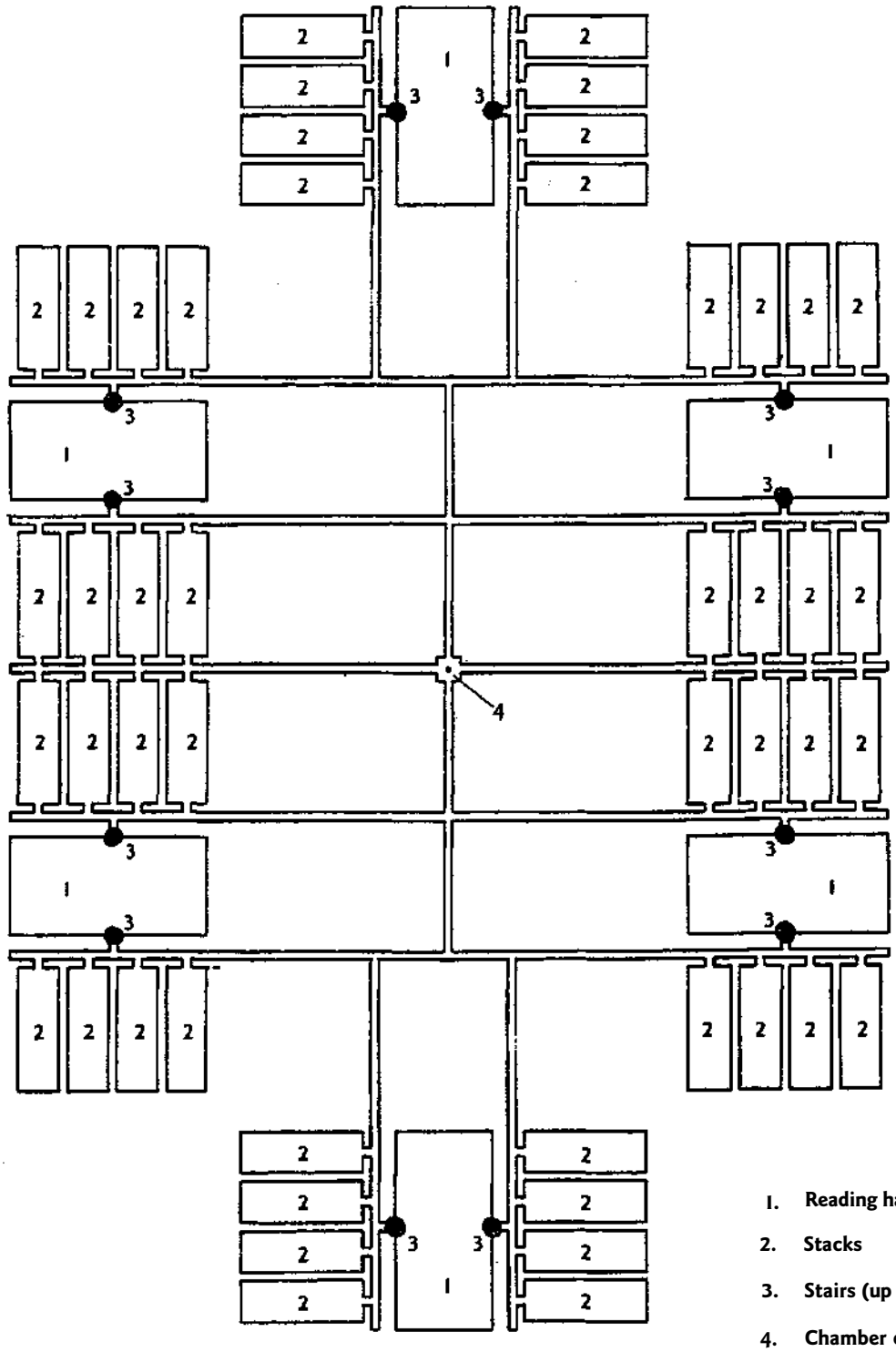
Characters who take the clue provided in the fragment may attempt to move the pedestal in the center of the vault. Underneath it will be found a shallow recess holding a dusty tome (Handout #4). lying next to the tome are two parchment scrolls, written in Adûnaic, which Eärnil recovered from the Temple at the time of its destruction (Umbar Scrolls #1 and 2).

Hall of the Faithful
"The Upper Halls"



1. Stairwell to Barad Hiraer
2. Upper Halls
3. Stairs to Lower Halls

Hall of the Faithful
"The Lower Halls"



1. Reading hall
2. Stacks
3. Stairs (up and down)
4. Chamber of the Karma

Handout #2: Excerpt from *The Annals of the Kings*

With Tarannon, the twelfth king, began the line of the Ship-kings. who built navies and extended the sway of Gondor along the coasts west and south of the Mouths of Anduin. To commemorate his victories as Captain of the Hosts, Tarannon took the crown in the name of Falastur 'Lord of the Coasts'.

In his day. war was first kindled with Umbar. The great cape and land-locked firth of Umbar had been Númenorean land since days of old; but it was a stronghold of the King's Men. who were afterwards called the Black Númenoreans, corrupted by Sauron, and who hated above all the followers of Elendil. After the fall of Sauron their race swiftly dwindled or became merged with the Men of Middle-earth, but they inherited without lessening their hatred of Gondor. Umbar, therefore, was only taken at great cost, remaining unconquered until the days of Eärnil, the nephew of Tarannon, who succeeded him.

Tarannon was the only heir of Meneldil's line who was childless and without a son. For it is said that Berúthiel, Tarannon's wife and Queen, was a loveless and wicked woman. Now Berúthiel lived in the King's House in Osgiliath, hating the sounds and smells of the sea and the house that Tarannon built below Pelargir upon arches whose feet stood deep in the wide waters of Ethir Anduin; she hated all making, all colours and elaborate adornment, wearing only black and silver and living in bear chambers, and the gardens of the house in Osgiliath were filled with tormented sculptures beneath cypresses and yews.

She had nine black cats and one white, her slaves, with whom she conversed, or read their memories, setting them to discover all the dark secrets of Gondor, so that she knew those things that men wish most to keep hidden, setting the white cat to spy upon the black, and tormenting them. No man in Gondor dared touch them; all were afraid of them, and cursed when they saw them pass.

Her name was erased from the Book of the Kings, but the memory of men is not wholly shut in books, and the cats of Queen Berúthiel never passed wholly out of men's speech. King Tarannon had her set on a ship with her cats and set adrift on the sea before a north wind. The ship was last seen flying past Umbar under a sickle moon, with a cat at the masthead and another as a figure-head on the prow.

Eärnil repaired the ancient haven of Pelargir, and built a great navy. He laid siege by sea and land to Umbar, and took it. Eärnil made Umbar into a great harbour and fortress of the power of Gondor, and he caused the Temple of Melkor to be razed to the ground. But Eärnil did not long survive his triumph. He was lost with many ships and men in a great storm off Umbar. Ciryandil his son continued the building of ships; but the Men of the Harad, led by the lords that had been driven from Umbar, came up with great power against that stronghold, and Ciryandil fell in battle in Haradwaith.

For many years Umbar was invested, but could not be taken because of the sea-power of Gondor. Ciryaher son of Ciryandil bided his time, and at last when he had gathered strength he came down from the north by sea and by land, and crossing the River Harnen his armies utterly defeated the Men of the Harad, and their kings were compelled to acknowledge the overlordship of Gondor. Ciryaher then took the name of Hyarmendacil 'South-victor'.

Handout #3: The Prayer Fragment

Now the death of my beloved master came about in this way. As our ships were approaching the coasts of Umbar's peninsula, a dark storm came upon us, suddenly and at unawares. My Lord Eärnil exhorted his captains to sail towards the land at once, rather than to attempt to weather the storm where we were. But to myself, Targil his servant, the King spoke these words:

'Targil, my loyal companion, heed me when I say that this is my last voyage; for I perceive now that it has been fated that I never reach land again. But I charge you to deliver the oiolairë seeds safely to my tower in Umbar, and there to plant them, lest Uinen's protection be denied to that place which it is necessary above all others to seal off from our foes.'

Then my Lord thrust into my hands a leather pouch, which contained the blessed seeds, and laid his hands upon me, chanting:

Lady of the Waters, preserve us in our paths
Blessed Uinen, defend us from the storm and what it hides
Remember the Sign of your covenant
The Karma that heals, the curse repealed

Then I asked of my Lord what these words meant, but Eärnil would say only that the sign of the Karma would conceal their import, until the right time should be fulfilled. These were the last words my Lord spoke to me, ere he caused me to be flung overboard, to brave the perils of Ossë's wrath while the ships of the King were drown beneath the waves.

But I have brought the oiolairë seeds to Umbar, for I alone survived the wreck of the storm, and planted them in the courtyard of my Lord's tower, that the prophecy of the dark seer might not come to pass.

Handout #4: Tarannon and Eärnil's Remembrances

Upon the occasion of my death and your succession, I present to you, my nephew and chosen heir, these remembrances of my departed wife and Queen; that you, Eärnil—and you alone—shall know the truth of these things, or at least such truth as has been revealed. Her tale remains unfinished, and I deem that it has fallen to you to solve its mystery.

I need not recount the tale in full, for you yourself were present for a large part of it; yet I fear that there may still be many blank pages to this strange book, and I have resolved to write them down in the hope that they may guide you in your quest. These things I haue kept long in my heart, but haue revealed to no living man save yourself. Keep them well!

I, Eärnil, received these memoirs from the hand of Gundor, my late uncle's Steward, upon my ascension to the kingship in the year 913. I present them now with additions from my own hand, joining to Tarannon's words my own testimony concerning the Queen—the circumstances of her coming, the events surrounding her death, and my determination to understand her fate.

The answers have been in my hands for nearly three winters now, but the needs of war have hindered me from pursuing them to the end. Indeed, I fear that I may never undertake the final journey. Therefore, lest her name fade forever from memory, I have set to writing these things concerning the woman whose true name I alone have known.

It was during the reign of Siriondil, the eleventh king, that the heirs of Anárion first turned their thoughts toward the sea. But they perceived that the power of the Black Númenórean lords of Umbar and the kings of the Harad, whose dominion of the coastlands drew nigh to the Ethir, would hinder their designs.

Therefore the King appointed his elder son Tarannon to the office of Captain of the Hosts, and laid before him the task of extending the sway of Gondor west and south of Anduin. Tarannon won the coasts of Harad as far as the River Harnen, and gave to these the name of Harondor; but he was unable to advance further south due to the strength of the ships of Umbar and the men of Harad.

It was at this time that Prince Thorondur of Arnor, son to King Eärendur and master of Tharbad, forged an alliance with Tarannon, betrothing to the future king of Gondor his own daughter Berethiel, and promising to send him ships to aid him in the war against Umbar. And when Siriondil breathed his last and the time for Tarannon's ascension had come, Thorondur sent Berethiel on a ship to wed him. But her ship foundered in a great storm off the isle of Tolfalas, and all of her crew were lost. Of the fate of Berethiel, the King himself has written in his memoirs, but I shall keep that until its proper time.

The strange storm had vanished the next morning, almost as swiftly as it had arisen, and I rode along the island shore at Tarannon's side, searching for any sign of Berethiel or her vessel. The ship had been wrecked on the perilous shoals of the Western Straight, and its remnants lay strewn upon the sandy beach of Nenmárros Bay. There was only one survivor—a woman.

We never doubted that it was Berethiel, for she was clad in royal garments, but she was in a swoon and could not be revived until she had been brought back to the safety of Caras Tolfalas, the haven that Tarannon had fortified when he became Captain of the Hosts. I was present with the King when the woman awoke.

At first she was unable to speak, as though stricken with dumbness; but in time she began to form words. She spoke in the Adûnaic tongue, and did not appear to understand the Common Speech. The woman could recall neither her name nor her ship, but suffered herself to be called 'Berethiel' by the king.

I remember the first time you were parted from us, Eärnil; that was when you captured the Black Númenórean lord, Belphegor, while patrolling the Western Straight after the storm. Berethiel had grown strong enough to ride; and I brought her to Nenmárros Bay, for I thought that the ruin of her ship would return her memory to her.

As we searched amid the wreckage for anything that she might recognize, Berethiel bent over and drew out of the tide an amulet—a red jewel strung upon a leather thong. She looked at me and said: 'I remember now, my father gave this to me.' Her words were cut short by a violent seizure. She cried out, clutching her breast as though she had been stabbed, and fell to the ground. I bore her to the safety of the Hallows, and made a fire for her warmth.

When she awoke, Berethiel said that she remembered her name and who she was. She recalled now the events of her voyage, and how the storm had seized her ship ere it could reach Tolfalas. But the memory of the storm itself eluded her. She would only say that there was malice in that storm, and that it had pursued her ship as a wolf stalking its prey. She shivered, for she believed that someone was trying to kill her.

When Berethiel had recovered from her seizure, Tarannon departed the island, bringing her to Osgiliath as his betrothed. I, Eärnil, remained behind to command the garrison at Tolfalas. Of my capture of Belphegor, I remember only that when he was brought in chains to Caras Tolfalas, he had looked upon Berethiel and smiled. Tarannon took the crown in the name of Falastur, and took to wife and Queen the woman whom all now believed to be the daughter of Thorondur of Arnor.

The events at Nenmárros Bay continued to haunt my wife in Osgiliath. A veil of shadow covered her remembrance of what had happened inside the storm, and she could not penetrate it. Therefore, I instructed her in the use of the palantír, for the stone is able to view things that lie in the past. But it proved of no avail.

Then it was that the Queen experienced a vision or dream unaided by the palantír: At Arien's setting, Berethiel stood in the courtyard of our house. She saw the red light of the setting sun strike the Tower of the Dome, kindling it's silver roof like flame. But then she saw the storm approach.

From the south it came, and its pinions wreathed the city in a red darkness. Then she saw the silver Dome smoke and blacken, as though a fire burned beneath it, and streams of blood began to flow down its sides, staining and corrupting it. Berethiel

awoke from her dream suddenly, so that I too was roused from sleep. She reported to me what she had seen, and after she had finished the tale, your arrival in Osgiliath was heralded.

Tarannon speaks here of my coming to Osgiliath, bearing ill-tidings of Umbar. For forty days the watchers on Harnen had espied a constant trail of smoke rising from the direction of the Black Númenórean stronghold, and we feared that these wicked lords of necromancy were slaughtering victims to Melkor, in whose Temple they still served gladly even after the fall of Númenor.

It was a harbinger of war as we had guessed, and Tarannon returned with me at once to Caras Tolfalas to muster our forces in the defence of Gondor. He would not suffer the Queen to be brought into a place of war, however well-guarded, for she was with child; but Berethiel would not be parted by so great a distance from the King, and could not bear to remain in Osgiliath after her vision. Therefore, Tarannon consented to her accompanying him as far as the Ethir, where she could dwell in the safety of the villa he had built there.

The war was renewed for several months, and I held the garrison of Tolfalas while the King led the fleet against the Umbarean forces south of Harnen. Then it was that Prince Thorondur promised us timely aid to our cause, having prepared seven strong ships of war at Tharbad and bidding me sail there to take command of them. I deemed that it would be safe to leave Tolfalas in the hands of one of my lieutenants, for the war was now many days voyage south of the island; but evil came of it, despite my judgment.

For after I had left for Tharbad, it happened that Belphegor, the Umbarean lord whose ship I had captured, broke out of his imprisonment at Caras Tolfalas and escaped in his ship, bound for the Ethir. Whether by purpose or fate, I do not know. There is more to tell of this, but first I must relate what happened when I arrived in Tharbad.

When Thorondur received me, he inquired as to the health of his daughter (for he had not seen Berethiel since her departure for Gondor). In the course of our conversation, the Prince made reference to his daughter's golden hair (for that is a rare thing among the Dúnedain). This troubled me greatly, for unless my eyes had lost their sight, the woman whom Tarannon and I had found upon the beach of Nenmárros Bay had had hair dark as the night.

I did not speak of this to Thorondur, because I did not yet know the truth of the matter; but I took my leave of the Prince at once and returned to Tolfalas in haste. I would have waited for the King's return from Harnen, but the news of Belphegor's escape multiplied my fears. The island garrison had been unaware of the Queen's presence in the Ethir (Tarannon having resolved to keep her whereabouts a secret), but now it seemed that the King's precautions had turned to our undoing.

I arrived to find the King's villa empty and abandoned. The Queen had returned to Osgiliath, but she did not return alone. She had left behind a diary recounting all that had befallen her since her coming to the Ethir. I have reproduced those sections of it that seemed to shed light on and interpret the events which were to follow. The entries were not dated, so it is sometimes difficult to guess how much time has passed between them. I sometimes wonder whether it would have mattered .

More than three weeks have passed since I have heard aught of Tarannon my husband, and the birth of our child draws near. But the passage of Time has become strange to my eyes—moments slip away like tears, the days seem to lengthen into years, the world around me has grown silent and empty. I, too, am changing.

Hold me close to you, Memory: for I could not bear to be torn from you a second time! And yet you drift away from me like the waters that pass beneath the arches of this house. Will you be lost again at sea? Will I ever know peace? I feel as though I should be driven to madness but for the life that grows within me—the only thing that means anything to me now....

The walls of this villa close in upon me like a prison. Eryn my maidservant has offered me the hospitality of her village, and Anborn the King's guard has granted me leave to visit the Ethir Folk there. He knows that I have grown weak, but he cannot understand the cause of it. I fear that I perceive all too well what is happening to me. But why was I chosen to suffer? What crime have I committed that I should pay so terrible a price? I cannot say, and that is the cruelest part to bear....

Something terrible has happened at the villa in my absence. Anborn came struggling into Talain by foot just before nightfall. He was wounded, and his whole body was burning with a fever. He was too exhausted to tell what evil had befallen him, but the village headman told me that he had seen Anborn's condition before. The red stone that my father had given me began to glow with an inner fire when I drew near to Anborn's body. Unable to endure waiting for Anborn to recover, I commanded the Ethir Folk to bear me back to the villa in their boats. Eryn accompanied me.

There was a ship moored next to the villa when I arrived—it was the vessel of the Black Númenórean whom Eärnil had captured near Tolfalas just after the storm. There had been fighting between these rogues and Anborn's men, but not one on either side was left alive—save Belphegor, and he shared the same affliction as Anborn; but Belphegor had not been wounded by steel, and had enough strength to speak words to me.

Whether fate or choice had brought him to me, I cannot guess, but from his lips I learned the secrets that the storm had veiled from me since I was washed ashore—terrible secrets. Even the thought of repeating his words fills me with loathing, but I fear that in a very short time I may never be able to recount them again to anyone.

Berethiel is dead. They killed her, and I have been cursed to bear her memory to fill my own emptiness. But now the burden is worse, for alien memories that once were mine have returned to me, and I understand now the evil purpose for which they were hidden from me until now. No longer can I be Berethiel, but neither can I return to who I once was, before the storm. I, too, will soon be dead, but not by their hands.

They seek my child, the one thing that I might still have called my own. That is why Berethiel had to die. That is why they have murdered my sleep; and the day will come when they will seek to make my child a tool for their evil designs. They must not succeed, but neither will I decide my child's fate, for it would be their way to dominate the choice of another. This I will not do.

I remember a time—an abyss of time that now separates me from my life. I remember the red stone, and the cats....Oh, yes; the cats! Those eyes that could find their way home in a blind night. Those eyes that preyed upon the living. And I remember how Fuinur saved me from death at the hands of their master; how he loved me as the daughter he never had; how he gave me the stone to protect me; how he said we would live forever—it was a lie, and I must suffer the penalty.

But I have the stone; and soon I will have the cats, for they fear this thing and are bound to the will of the one that wields it. I will bind them to this tortured soul, and they will receive my pain. They will not save me, but they may be able to help me save my child. There are many dark secrets in Gondor, windows that look into the uncertain future or into the dark past.

Time is not deceived, but if there is a way to hold on just a little longer, perhaps I will live to see the birth of my child. I have nothing more to hope for in this hateful dream. Eryn will guide me through the night's labyrinth, to this den of fear where they dwell. Now, follow me to the end.

I followed the Queen to Osgiliath, and found her in the King's House with a newborn infant cradled in her arms. Gundor the Steward was with her, and he spoke to me of the circumstances of the Queen's arrival and of the strange events that followed.

He told me that the Queen had arrived by night, and that she was borne up the river by a ship of Umbar (though it was manned by the Ethir Folk). Belphegor was with her, but he was too weak to move of his own accord, and the Queen ordered him brought to the courtyard of the King's House. The Queen was herself weakened by the travail of labour, and was carried to a bed in the house; but with her came ten cats—nine black and one white—such as are common to the Ethir, and each was carried in the arms of one of the Queen's attendants.

Now Gundor was present at the birth of the Queen's child, and he told me that Berethiel had lain near to death for many hours. But the cats encircled her as though protecting her from some unseen enemy, and she lived.

It became known that the Queen had returned to Osgiliath; but she refused all visitors, and Gundor instructed the servants to keep silent about the matter of the child. But a shadow of fear fell upon the people of Osgiliath during the following days, before my arrival; for it was reported that these cats were seen in many places of the city, and even as far as Minas Anor and Minas Ithil. How they were able to travel so swiftly was never discovered, but Gundor had heard from the King's seers that these creatures had made their way into the chambers of the palantíri and were gazing into the stones.

The fate of Belphegor and Anborn the Queen's guard is better left unspoken, but rumor of the foul end to which their condition had brought them soon spread uncontrollably throughout Osgiliath; and people cursed the Queen, naming her 'Berúthiel,' that is 'Woman of Malice.' Anborn and Belphegor had been infested by these cat-things which, it seems, only wore the *fana* of cats, and when their flesh had been corrupted beyond humanity, the creatures rose out of them and disappeared.

Whether these things were sent by the Queen was never learned, but Berethiel was so weakened that she could barely speak. When I found her she was like a candle flickering in the wind. Overcome with pity for her anguish which I did not understand, I took her hand and in my desperation asked her who in truth she was. 'Ancalimë, daughter of Fuinur,' was her answer; and those were the last words that passed her lips.

I bore the Queen with her child in great haste to the King, who had returned to Caras Tolfalas from the war. The cats followed, as though bound to her (though the red stone of which she spoke in her diary was nowhere to be found). Tarannon was overcome with grief for his wife's death, but commanded that her body be set upon a boat and surrendered to the grace of Uinen. The cats would not be parted from her.

The fate of Ancalimë's child is a secret known only to myself and a few others (lest the Queen's fears about the dark designs she wrote of should prove true); but I shall pass this knowledge onto Ciryandil my own son when the time comes for him to succeed me. In my quest to discover the truth about the Queen (to which I now, at last, turn), this secrecy has been well-vindicated.

I succeeded Tarannon Falastur upon his death in the year 913, and resolved to renew war against Umbar; for I perceived that the answers to my questions would lie there in the end. And in the year 933, I led the hosts against the Black Númenórean haven by land and sea, and took it in that same year. I destroyed the wicked Temple of Melkor, whose alter had seen great evil, and slew its warden, who prophesied to me in these words even as his life flowed out of him:

Hear me, faithful shoes of the West!
And know that the hour of thy doom draws nigh;
For though 'reft of life, my words shall not perish.
Nay, for already thou knottiest the sign that was hidden.
Its seed has been planted in thy midst.
And ten lives of Men shall not pass ere its fruit be revealed.
And should set foot upon these stones,
And raise up this Temple from its ruin.
Then will thou know this one, for it is a mortal name;
And will call upon the Lord of the Dark,
That those who serve him should be redeemed at last,
And taste within themselves the cup of deathlessness.
And the name of Melkor will overshadow the ashes of their foes.

These words will I ever remember. But I have razed that Temple to the ground, and have built a strong tower over it, and have caused to be set about it a circle of oiolairë trees that are sacred to Uinen, to ward off any evil that should try to realize the prophecy.

Lady of the Waters, preserve us in our paths
Blessed Uinen, defend us from the storm and what it hides
Remember the Sign of your covenant
The Karma that heals, the curse repealed

IN THE NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE EXILE, THE LORDS OF UMBAR SAT IN FEAR, FOR THE ELENDILI WERE PRESSING UPON THEIR COASTAL DOMINIONS IN HARADWAITH, AND WERE ADVANCING WITH FIRE AND WAR EVEN UNTO THE CAPE OF UMBAR. IN THAT TIME WAS HEARD A VOICE OF PROPHECY, THAT SPOKE THE PROMISES OF MELKOR TO THE REMNANT THAT STILL HELD TO THE OLD WAYS, SAYING THAT THE LORD OF THE DARK HAD NOT ABANDONED HIS FOLLOWERS, BUT WAS PREPARING TO GRANT THEM AN UNENDING LEGACY FOR THE CONTINUANCE OF THEIR BLOODLINE.

MANY DOUBTED THIS VOICE, WHOSE NAME WAS CALLED ZIMRAKHIL, FOR THE KING'S MEN HAD DWINDLED, AND NO WOMAN OF PURE LINEAGE NOW LIVED TO BEAR SONS TO THEM. BUT THE PROPHET MOCKED THEIR UNBELIEF, 'FOR', HE SAID, 'BENEATH THE SURFACE OF ARDA, FUINUR YET SITS UPON HIS CARVEN THRONE, AND BESIDE HIM ANCALIMË HIS DAUGHTER, WHOSE VEINS PUMP WITH THE BLOOD OF ARPHARAZÔN.'

THEN MANY BELIEVED, AND IN THEIR DESPERATION THE LORDS HEEDED THE WILL OF ZIMRAKHIL AS ONE SENT WITH AUTHORITY THOUGH THEY DID NOT WHOLLY UNDERSTAND THE DESIGNS OF MELKOR. ZIMRAKHIL BADE THEM JOURNEY INTO THE GREAT DESERT TO A PLACE THAT WAS CALLED THE MIRROR OF FIRE. THERE, IN DARK WATERS OF NENDUHIR, LAY FUINUR'S WELL. AND ZIMRAKHIL GAVE TO THEM THE KEY THAT WOULD OPEN THE DOORS OF HIS HALL, AND THEY BROUGHT FORTH ANCALIMË, FOSTER-DAUGHTER OF FUINUR, UNTO A GREAT DESTINY

Umbar Scroll #1

LET IT BE KNOWN THAT IN THE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE EXILE I, FUINUR, LORD OF BOTH FAR AND NEAR HARAD, DEFIED THE CURSE OF DEATH, NAMING FOR MYSELF AND FOR ANCALIMË MY DAUGHTER THE FULFILLMENT OF MELKOR'S PROMISE. FOR BY THE POWER OF THE KUILËONDO I HAVE SUMMONED OUT OF THE LIVING WATERS OF NENDUHIR THOSE NAMELESS THINGS THAT GNAW AT THE FOUNDATIONS OF ARDA, COMMANDING THEM TO PREPARE FOR ME A MANSION WHERE THE STING OF DEATH SHALL NOT TOUCH ME. TO THIS, MY ETERNAL SEAT OF DOMINION, SHALL ALL HARADWAITH DO HOMAGE, UNTIL THE LORD OF THE DARK IS PLEASED TO BESTOW MY GIFT UPON ALL THAT SERVE HIM.

Umbar Scroll #2

The attack on the Hall

Only a few brief moments after the characters finish reading, a powerful tremor will rock the chamber. As the shock-wave hits, Parmandil will be pinned to the floor by falling rubble. While they were reading, the Corsair attack had broken out against the haven above, creating a distraction for Zimrakhil to draw once again upon the power of the Kuilëondo—this time, to rupture one of the river walls to the Hall of the Faithful, thus creating for him a means of entrance (and causing water to begin flooding the lower levels of the Hall).

Zimrakhil is with Belphegor and ten of Calimon's well-armed crew, who will begin searching for the third of the key that Eärnil hid in the depths of the Hall. Zimrakhil actually knows where this hiding place is, but they still must make their way through the rubble of the quickly-flooding halls. If the characters venture away from the Karma vault to find help for Parmandil, they will come across his scribe Aramis—slain by Zimrakhil's men. If they follow the noise being made by the intruders, they will swiftly discover that water is seeping into the lower halls.

Zimrakhil has insured that the tremor caused by the Kuilëondo would seal off all of the main stairwells to the upper halls, but there are air-shafts large enough for a person to crawl through with openings in the ceilings of many of the lower chambers, including the Karma vault. These air-shafts could be used to escape to the upper halls and, finally, to the surface.

But there will be little time to plan an escape, for once Zimrakhil has obtained the key fragment, he will use the Kuilëondo once more to fully open the ruptured wall to the river waters. Should the characters pursue the sounds of his men, there may be a confrontation with the sorcerer. But the characters will be unarmed, and Zimrakhil has the power of the Kuilëondo on his side. Nevertheless, this may be another good opportunity for the characters to size up their antagonists.

The sorcerer may even "gloat" about his plans if they encounter him, thinking that they will perish in the deluge in any case—but don't let on too much to the players. Setting eyes on the Kuilëondo should be enough for them to make the connection between the stone Eärnil spoke of, and their present adversaries. If the characters tarry too long, they may have to run for their lives or be drowned in the waters exploding into the Hall (which could make escape an interesting challenge).

Pursuing the Corsairs (30-31 Cerveth)

By the time the characters will have been able to make their way (with or without the wounded Parmandil) safely to the surface, Calimon's raiding party will be long-gone. From Prince Aldamir's soldiers who fought in the defense of the haven, it may be learned that the raid was led by Calimon, Lord Morlaen's son, and that he had been captaining the Corsair vessel Arangwil, which retreated back downriver with the other ships following the raid.

If the characters choose to pursue the Corsairs, Prince Aldamir will give them access to a small but relatively swift patrol boat, with local maps of the Ethir and the surrounding bay, marking likely hide-outs and staging-posts for the Corsairs. The patrol boat will be captained by one of the Ethir Folk, who knows the waters of the lower Anduin well.

If the characters choose to make for Tarannon's villa, they will find it to be occupied by Calimon and his men, with the Arangwil laying in wait nearby. If they can defeat Calimon in battle or somehow sneak aboard his ship, the will find a letter from Morlaen lying on the desk in the captain's cabin (Handout #5). If captured and interrogated, Calimon will claim not to know the location of Benish Armon (though in fact he does, and will make for it to warn Belphegor if forced to abandon Tarannon's villa.

Calimon,

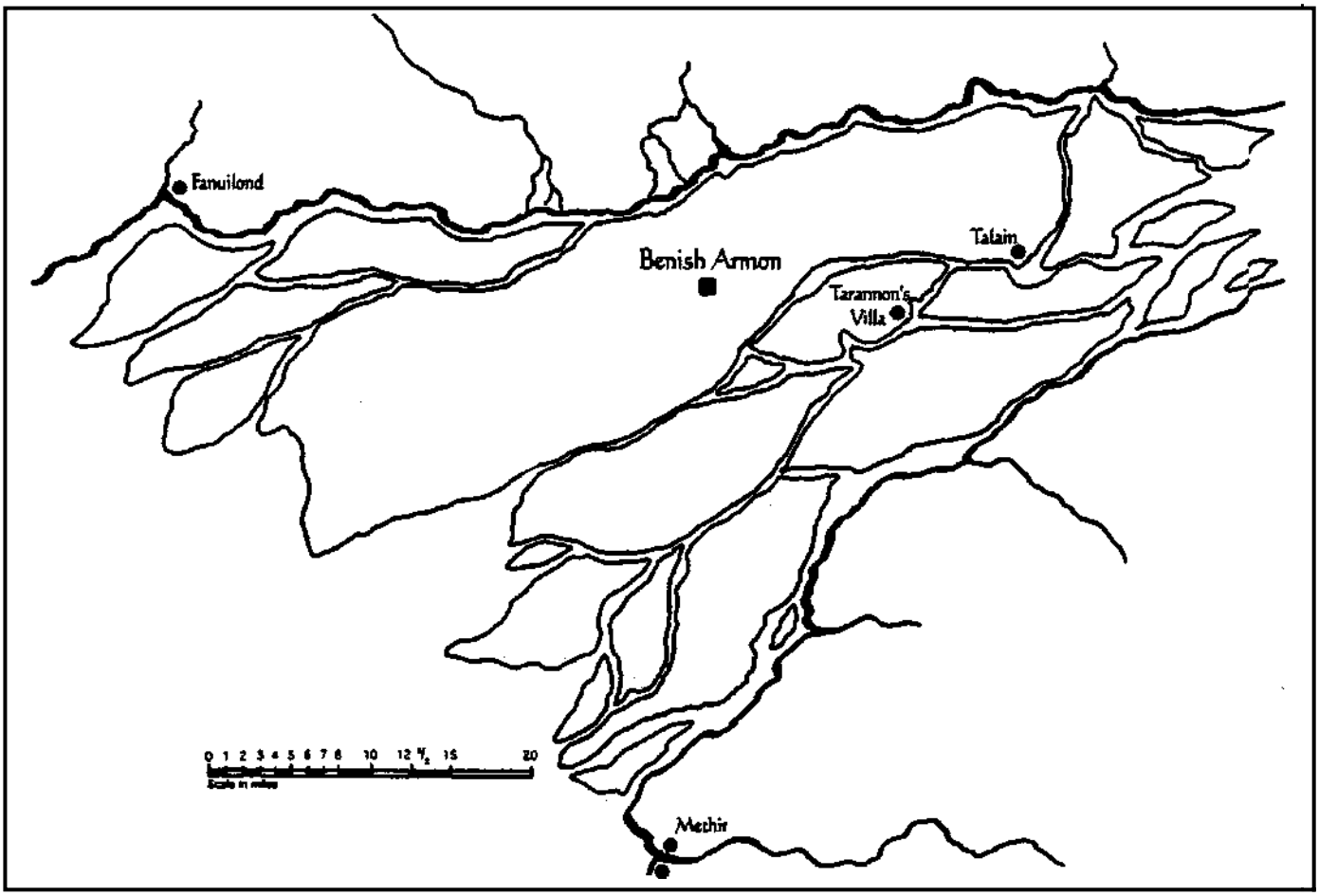
You are. to proceed with the Arangwil to Ethir Anduin, where you will meet a company of ships from Umbar. Together you will continue upriver to Pelargir and assist Zimrakhil and Belphegor in obtaining the artefact from the Hall of the Faithful. From thence, you will return to a place in the Ethir that is called Benish Armon.

Zimrakhil will join the other ships on their return to Umbar, but the Orthanc-stone must be surrendered to Belphegor. He will see to the awakening of these things against Vinitharya and his house. When that is achieved, you will return to Umbar at once.

Morlaen
22 Cerveth, 1450, III

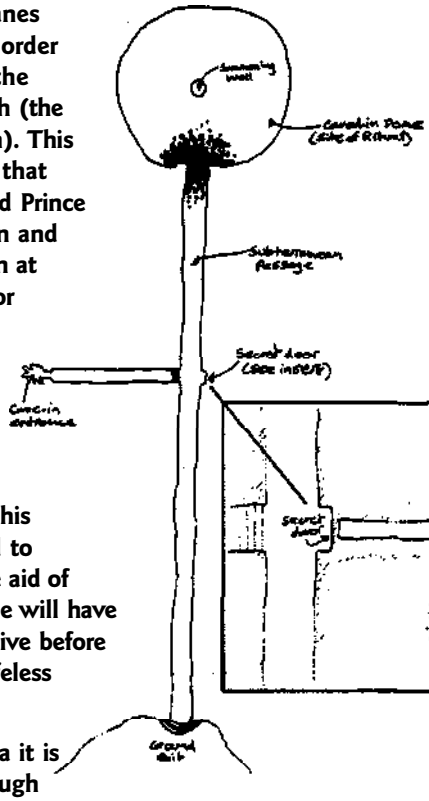
Handout #5: Letter found on the Arangwil

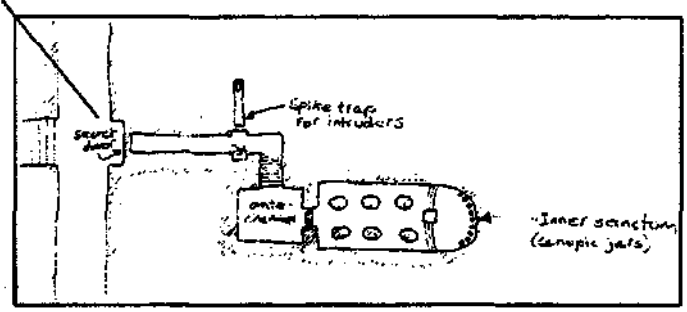
Ethir Anduin



The ritual of release (1 Urui)

Belphegor will enact the ritual to release Tevildo's thanes from Benish Armon in order to attack the King on the first night of the month (the night of the dark moon). This will fall on same night that Eldacar prepares to wed Prince Vidustain of Rhovanion and Lady Terieth of Anórien at Amon Hen. If Belphegor succeeds in the ritual, the nine cats will be directed through the line of sight of the stolen palantir, and they will infest the King and all his family (just as they did to Edrahil). Even with the aid of healers, the royal house will have only a few months to live before they are turned into lifeless statues.





From Tarannon's villa it is a full day's march through the Ethir swamps to the ruins of Benish Armon. If Calimon has escaped them, the characters may attempt to track him there. Otherwise, one of the Ethir Folk piloting their boat may be able to guide them. The sorcerer will be assisted at Benish Armon by the remainder of Calimon's crew (How many is up to the GM's discretion, depending on the strength and numbers of the player-characters).

Both the palantír of Orthanc and the fragment of the key to Fuinur's domain are in Belphegor's possession at Benish Armon. In order for the ritual to take effect, Belphegor must perform a blood sacrifice (one of the Ethir Folk, or perhaps one of Eldacar's Ethir-guard who had been stationed at Tarannon's villa but was captured). The victim's blood must be poured into the well at the center of the ruin (see accompanying map), followed by the contents of the cats' canopic jars. Once this is accomplished, the ethereal forms of the cats will arise from the well and await Belphegor's command. The sorcerer will bid each of them gaze into the Orthanc-stone and "lock-on" to their targets at Amon Hen. After doing this, Tevildo's thanes will abandon visible form altogether and fly towards Amon Hen.

The characters may intervene at any juncture of this process, depending on how soon they arrive and when they choose to act. If Calimon managed to escape Tarannon's villa and reach Benish Armon before them, he or Belphegor may have caused sentinels to be set around the site to warn of any intruders. If the characters defeat Belphegor, they will have recovered the palantír and come into possession of a third of the key to Fuinur's Well. The next move must be theirs.

Deciding what to do next

In the process of recovering the Orthanc-stone from its captors, the characters will have uncovered a deeper conspiracy. Namely, that the minions of evil are searching for the descendant of Queen Berúthiel and King Tarannon, presumably to accomplish some dark purpose. What that purpose is may yet be unclear to the characters, but all of the loose ends accompanying this puzzle appear to lie in Umbar, at Eärnil's tower that guards the foundations of Melkor's temple against the return of his servants.

While the characters deliberate as to the most appropriate course of action, Zimrakhil arrives in Umbar with the Kuilëondo and Tevildo's canopic jar, which he hides in the foundations of the Temple. The sorcerer waits with Neithan for Belphegor's return to Umbar with news that the ritual of release has been accomplished. If rumor of Belphegor and/or Calimon's defeat comes to their ears, Neithan and Zimrakhil will have to contrive other plans. Most important to them now will be the acquisition of the Karma from Fuinur's Well, which means that they will need to obtain the other two pieces (held by Lóthriel and the characters respectively).

The voyage to Umbar (2-6 Urui)

If the characters make known their desire to go to Umbar, Prince Aldamir's boatmen will direct them to Captain Rastarin of "The Calm before the Storm" (the T.C.B.S.), a smuggler-captain who plies the waters between Umbar and the Ethir on a regular basis. Rastarin was a piratess from Eriador who found her way into Belfalas Bay during the Kin-strife. At that time, she became a close friend to Neithan, who was then serving Castamir as Ethir-captain.

Rastarin knows nothing of Neithan's association with dark cults and the like, but she does keep up occasional contact with him during her visits to Umbar. Because she is a smuggler and not a Gondorian by birth, Rastarin is able to enter and leave Umbar freely (which would be a boon to the characters, who may not wish to make their presence known in the stronghold of King Eldacar's enemies.

The T.C.B.S. keeps anchor at the nearby port of Fanuilond, only a few hours sail beyond the Ethir on the coast of Lebennin. For a suitable fee, Rastarin will agree to bring them to Umbar. If they choose to divulge anything of their mission, Rastarin may direct the characters to Neithan, whom she trusts and who knows a great deal about current happenings in Umbar.

Investigating in Umbar

The walls and haven of Umbar were unable to contain the mass exodus of Castamir's family and supporters when these arrived from Gondor in 1448. Accordingly, it was agreed upon that the exiles would occupy the Enclave, a smaller, secondary settlement on the opposite side of the headland of Umbar, which was then the residence for Mûrabêth's father, Telemnar, who was Governor of the landward territory surrounding Umbar.

Telemnar granted use of his personal domicile, Eärnil's Tower, to Castaher as High-captain of the confederate forces. Castaher resided in this tower with his wife Lóthriel until Neithan secretly caused a fire to be set within it. Castaher perished in that fire, and Lóthriel has moved into Mûrabêth's house, leaving Neithan as Warden of Eärnil's Tower. This is the very same tower which stands over the forgotten foundations of the Temple of Melkor, where Zimrakhil and the Kuilëondo now await the fulfillment of their designs.

The purpose of the fire had been three-fold. Firstly, the oiolairë trees in its courtyard which formed a magical barrier against entry into the Temple had to be destroyed. Only their blackened and charred trunks now remain. Secondly, Neithan needed an excuse to drive away the tower's present inhabitants, in order that they not interfere with the re-opening of the Temple below. Thirdly, Neithan needed to kill Castaher in order to obtain the remaining two fragments of the key to Fuinur's Well. Lóthriel escaped with one in her possession, but she has no idea that it was the cause of the burning, nor that Neithan desires it.

Neithan will invite the characters to inspect the tower if they appear on his doorstep (especially if Rastarin is with them). He will be most interested to learn of what they know (or suspect) about Zimrakhil's plot, and whether they are in possession of one of the three fragments of the key. If approached openly about the cats and the theft of the palantír, Neithan will tell them in whispered tones about the minions of Melkor in Umbar, pointing to Morlaen as the most likely candidate for their leadership. He may even admit to knowing about Berúthiel's descendant, spinning some far-flung theory that the unborn child that Lóthriel now bears in her womb may be the one which the cultists seek—why else would they have burned the tower to kill off her husband?

If the characters show him their fragment of the key, Neithan will contemplate an alliance with them: to journey with him to the Mirror of Fire, and then betray them after they have helped him to enter Fuinur's Well. All he need do will be to convince them to persuade Lóthriel to surrender her fragment (He will show them his, claiming that Castaher placed it in his care ere he perished, lest the cult of Melkor should obtain it.). Neithan can arrange for an audience with Lóthriel, as he himself is still trusted by her and not under suspicion for Castaher's death. As for the foundations of the Temple, there is but one secret entrance to it from the tower above, and Neithan will insure that searching characters do not find it.

Lóthriel may be quite trusting of the characters, especially if any of them are her kinsfolk (She is of the princely house of Belfalas.). She is ignorant of the workings of the cult and of the location of the Temple, save for its murder of her husband. If they appear trustworthy (and if Neithan vouches for them) Lóthriel will surrender the fragment, enabling them, together with Neithan, to fit all three pieces together, rendering the key functional at last.

Neithan knows that way to the Mirror of Fire, and Lóthriel can arrange for mounts and provisions for the long journey into Haradwaith. Before leaving Umbar, however, Zimrakhil will secretly bestow the Kuilëondo upon Neithan, that its power may aid him in eliminating the characters when the time for betrayal comes. The stone will be concealed around Neithan's neck during the journey.

The journey to the Mirror of Fire (7 Urui to 7 Ivanneth)

The Mirror of Fire lies in the burning heart of Haradwaith, nearly three hundred leagues south-east of Umbar across the dunes of the Great Desert. By camel, the journey will take a month's time. The GM may decide to provide the characters with encounters along the way; but this is not essential, as Neithan will bear with him a diplomatic seal of Umbar, which all warlords of the Southron Confederacy will respect. Neithan's destination will be the caravansary of Tûl Póac, a desert fortress-oasis overlooking the edge of the Mirror of Fire.

In 1450, Tûl Póac is under the control of a Northman mercenary-warlord named Konar (cf. *OH* 2: 15-19) who, by a strange twist of fate, found himself in the employ not of Eldacar but of Queen Mûrabêth during the Kin-strife, and so withdrew south with the other confederates upon Eldacar's return to Gondor.

At the time, Konar had become a warlord among the Haradan tribes along the southern shore of the Harnen estuary; but with the establishment of the Corsairs in Umbar, Mûrabêth invited him to assume control over the southernmost marches of their allies in the desert. Konar has ruled the Covshek nomads who wander the fringes of the Mirror for nearly a year now, but he has maintained close ties with Umbar.

Upon their arrival, Konar will be able to provide them with both information about the Mirror of Fire and its dangers, and to supply them with the necessary clothing and protection for crossing it. It is literally impossible to walk upon the Mirror under the full light of day, because of the heat; so the journey must be made by night, while by day special tents can be erected to cover travelers from the sun's rays.

More deadly than the heat, however, are the Vetar Vatra, the burning dust-storms that blow across the scorched plain like hungry demons, whose blazing winds are capable of searing human flesh. These storms only occur during the day-time; but this makes them all the more dangerous, since travelers will be unable to move under the sun's heat at this time. The only way to avoid the Vetar Vatra is by using the key.

The circular key which the characters with Neithan have assembled, when held against the night sky, operates as a navigational star-map, its interwoven silver strands indicating a twisting path that will lead its bearer along the ways of the Mirror where the Vetar Vatra do not blow. Nevertheless, in order to use this map effectively, the characters must already possess some kind of navigational skills (If none do, Neithan alone will be able to use it, as he has many years experience as a ship-captain.).

Crossing the Mirror of Fire (7-10 Ivanneth)

The journey across the desolation of the Mirror must be made on foot (Beasts of burden cannot endure the constant heat.). The characters will be given special cloaks used by the Covshek nomads to brave the heats of the fiery plain, which must be worn at all times to avoid dehydration. Metal armor will be discouraged, as it will tend to heat up to the point of burning the characters' skin, or worse.

The Mirror of Fire is the dead lake-bed of Arda's first spring, sloping gently downwards like a vast bowl for some thirty leagues. At its center lies what remains of the isle of Almaren: a cyclopean mesa of dead rock. At the very point where the lamp of Ormal struck the island, a deep rift has been torn. A path runs down this narrow canyon to a cave-opening, wherein the domain of Fuinur begins. Assuming they meet with no mishap, Neithan and the characters will reach this entrance at dawn after the third night of travel.

Entering Fuinur's Well

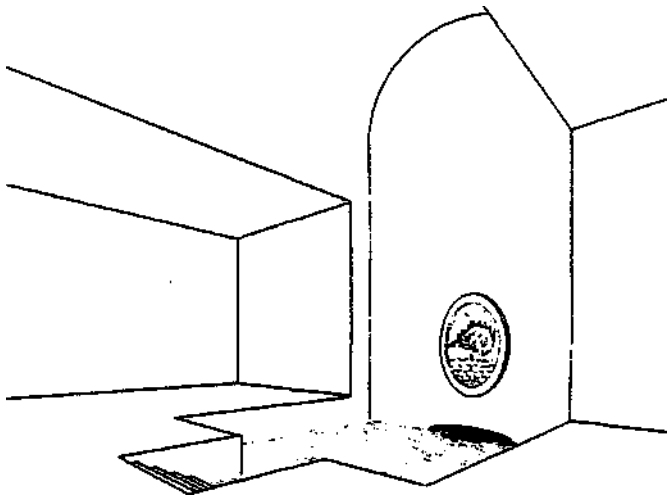
Inside the cave-opening, the characters will find a set of carven stone steps leading down. These stairs descend some two hundred feet and open onto a large, pillared chamber, at the far end of which is another set of steps that descend into a pool of dark water. On the wall above this pool is a carven representation of the Karma. The pool is twenty feet deep, and at its bottom, opening out from the wall beneath the Karma-image, is the lintel of a submerged passage that continues straight into the rock. At the top of the steps leading into the pool, the characters will find a small leather pouch containing several small nuggets of some translucent stone.

Neithan will be able to identify the nuggets as Desert Amber. The Covshek gather the Amber from their occasional forays into the Mirror, and Southron merchants sell them to the wealthy in Umbar for high prices. The Amber, which can be found in the cracks and crevices of the Mirror, is actually the hardened resin from Ormal's destroying fires. When such Amber is immersed within the waters of the Well, it emits an inner glow (which will enable characters to see once inside the otherwise lightless passages of Fuinur's realm.

The water of the pool is part of the living waters of Almaren, which are breathable by mortals. Their breathability, however, only takes effect after the painful and sometimes violent process accompanying the radical change of respiration the character will experience (i.e., the character must in effect "drown" prior to adapting to the new mode of breathing). A character so immersed will lie unconscious—dead, to all but the keenest perceptions—for anywhere between five and ten minutes.

Since the characters will not, of course, know this beforehand, their seemingly futile attempts to figure out "how it works" will most likely be the cause of a good deal of anxiety and doubt (Herein lies the real fun of running this scene in the adventure!). Characters who try to swim down the passage in search of air will either return in failure (it is several hundred yards long), or drown in the process. Once, however, the transition is accomplished, the water will take its effect.

Having one's lungs filled with liquid (however breathable) will slow a character's movement down considerably. Damage dealt and taken in combat will be reduced, due to the sluggishness of the water; missile weapons will be ineffective. Although verbal communication will be hindered, the waters of Almaren also possess the property of facilitating the transfer of thoughts. Characters unused to controlling or focusing their thoughts may find communication difficult (and, at times, even embarrassing, since they will be unable to "screen out" from their comrades certain stray thoughts never intended to be verbalized). Finally, the waters of Almaren will heal wounds caused by edged weapons (characters will still take damage, but they will not lose any further hit points from bleeding).



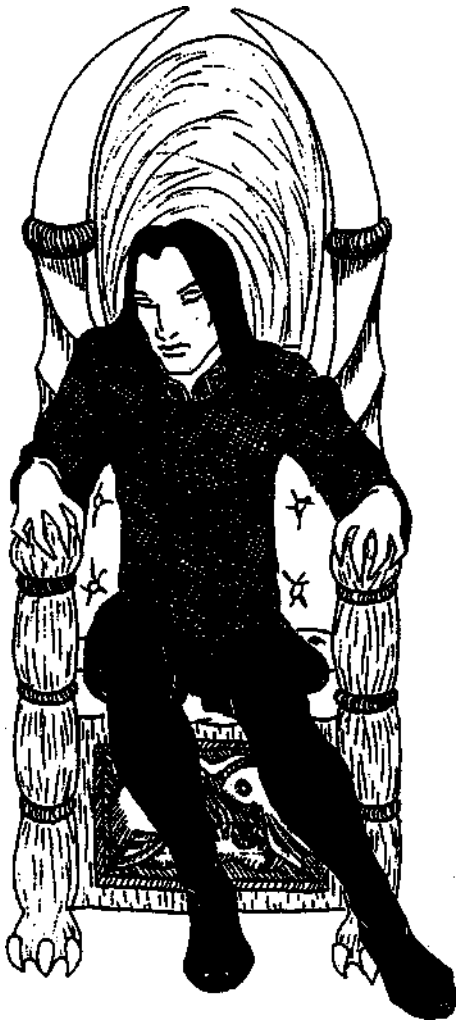
The sleep-inducing effects of the waters are long-term in nature, and will not have any discernible impact for a character immersed for only a few hours. Perceptive characters will begin to notice a physiological changes only after they have been in the water for a number of hours equal to their Constitution (if that statistic is reckoned on a 1-20 scale; if your system is percentile based, simply divide a character's score by five, rounding up). They will notice a slight but enduring drowsiness, accompanied by a noticeable slowing of their heartbeat. At the end of every subsequent duration of hours, the character must make a resistance roll or fall asleep. With each successive period, the character will reduce their chance of resistance by one factor (however that is calculated in a given rule system).

The descent to Fuinur's court

The passage leading out from the entrance-pool runs several hundred feet in, terminating in a small chamber with a circular "well" in the center of the floor. This shaft drops off into seeming nothingness, descending nearly a mile. The waters emanating from the well will be somewhat cooler than those of the passages. Also, there will appear to be a very slight "current" pulling the water downward into the shaft. This pull becomes stronger the deeper one descends, until it is impossible to resist it.

Characters who choose to leap into the shaft will feel themselves gradually descending faster and faster. Accompanying this will be a greater (though not damaging, since their own bodies are by now filled with it) pressure from the surrounding waters, which will eventually render them temporarily unconscious (again, another red herring to cause alarm and distress). If a character should attempt the descent without first having their lungs filled with the water, the greater intensity and speed of the transition may well kill them.

Unconscious characters will awaken at some point to the "audible" thoughts of their companions. They are all lying flat on their backs on the floor of another chamber. In its ceiling they will see the other end of the shaft opening, though they will have no means of guessing how much farther down they are or how long they have been slumbering. At one side of the chamber they are currently in is another passageway.



This (somewhat larger and more ornately decorated) corridor leads for a few hundred feet to a pair of huge stone doors. At the intersection of the doors is a circular depression into which the key may be placed. Once it is fit into the recess, the great doors will open onto a palatial hall of immeasurable size (900′ long; 300′ wide; 600′ high). Its walls, ceilings and floors are illuminated by living veins of Amber. A stairwell descends one hundred feet to the floor of the hall, and at its far end—almost indiscernible—is a throne.

Guarding the bottom of the entry stairs are two armored figures bearing spears. Their backs are turned to the entering characters, and they will not appear to notice their approach. These are Fuinur's court guards, many more of which line the far walls of the hall. They were archaic Númenórean plate armor, and carry weapons that have not seen the light of day for centuries. All are lost in sleep, and can only be awakened if brought outside of the waters of the Well. They still stand, leaning on their spears, but they are easily pushed over onto the floor by inquisitive characters. If characters "listen" in close proximity to one of these guards (or any of the sleeping court) they will after a few moments begin to catch mental images from their dreams—all of which will be in Adûnaic.

At the far end of the hall (which will take some minutes to cross), a series of tiers rises up toward the throne, each connected to the others by stairs. On these tiers the characters will look upon the slumbering court of Fuinur—Dúnadan nobility in luxuriously decadent clothing and jewelry. More guards also stand at the recesses of the stairs joining the tiers. At the top tier is Fuinur himself, reclining upon his carven throne, his locks of uncut hair streaming in the water like seaweed. At his feet, beside the throne, lies the Karma, wrought of silver, pearl, and gold. Next to Fuinur is another, smaller throne. It is empty—an awe-inspiring scene, frozen in time.

Neithan, Fuinur, and the Karma

This is the moment that Neithan will choose to betray the characters and seize the Karma. In order to prevent them from hindering him, Neithan will draw upon Tevildo's power to animate the court guards to kill or restrain the characters, while he snatches the Karma and runs off to lock them inside Fuinur's throne-room forever. Although not exactly conscious, the devious Prince of Cats will use his divine will to direct the weapons and limbs of the guards for battle. The characters will be outnumbered—there are perhaps a hundred and fifty guards in all—but Tevildo's control over them will be terminated as soon as Neithan has managed to shut the doors to the hall.

The characters may very well overpower Neithan and thwart his plan, despite the power arrayed against them, but should Neithan escape, there will be no way to open the doors from within—except by the Karma. This may seem pretty hopeless, but in fact it is not, for the Karma Neithan has stolen is not the real Karma, but a decoy! Fuinur has hidden the true Karma in a secret compartment in the floor in front of his throne, which can only be opened by his mental command.

The characters will, of course, have no inkling of this; though if they have perceived that the sleeping court yet dreams, and that these dreams can be made audible by virtue of the waters, they may get the bright idea of trying to communicate in some way with Fuinur himself. This tactic will be particularly apropos if one of the characters happens to belong to the line of Imrazôr (as Fuinur does), which will enhance their ability to make mental contact.

Fuinur does indeed dream, and can (with some effort and concentration) be made semi-conscious of some mental presence, though he will not be able to awaken *physically.* This is perhaps the most difficult encounter of the adventure to anticipate in writing, since so much will depend on how the characters interact with Fuinur and what they choose to tell him.

Fuinur is in fact aware of the nature of his present fate, and he also knows that "his" daughter no longer rests at his side. He remembers a voice speaking to him, a hateful voice (Zimrakhil), when "they took her from me." Fuinur has indeed repented of his longing for eternal life, having tasted the horror of endless serial existence, even in sleep. Besides death, his one wish is to learn the fate of his daughter (In this way, the characters may be able to learn from Fuinur all that happened to him and Ancalimë prior to their sleep, thus completing the mystery.).

If the characters are able to recount to him the tragic fate of Ancalimë, and explain to him Neithan and Zimrakhil's present attempt to fulfill the evil purpose for which she was taken from him, Fuinur may offer to grant them what aid is still within his power, in return for their promise to end his tortured life. If they agree, Fuinur will command the secret compartment in the floor to reveal the true Karma to them. With it, he says, one of Imrazôr's line (or another person at the GM's discretion) will be able to effect the re-opening of the doors to the hall, the raising of them up through the shaft, and even the negotiation of the gauntlet of the Vetar Vatra.

Showdown in Umbar (11 Ivanneth to 15 Narbeleth)

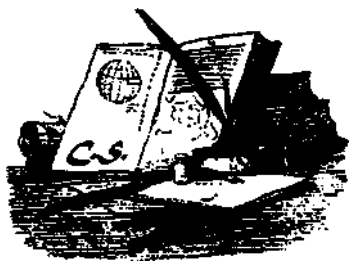
With the true Karma in hand, the characters will be free to pursue their antagonist to Umbar, where Neithan plans to release Tevildo at last from the Kuilëondo and make his bid for the kingship on Gondor. This ritual will take place in the foundations of the Temple beneath Eärnil's Tower, both of which will be heavily guarded by Neithan's supporters. Lóthriel will be abducted and used as the sacrificial victim whose blood will provide Neithan with the means to reverse Berúthiel's binding on Tevildo and the other cats. If they succeed in this, Gondor may well be in for another Kin-strife. It is this that the characters must now work to stop. That, however, is another story.

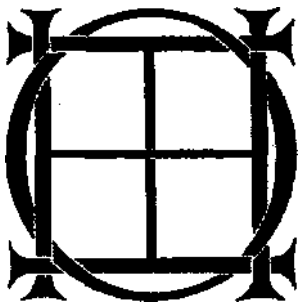
The powers of the Karma

The Karma of Aldarion carries with it the blessing of Uinen and the protection of Ulmo. To begin with, the Karma will enhance the mental powers of its user (as the line of Imrazôr enjoyed the Truesight of Westernesse). It may also provide magical protection against Zimrakhil's sorcery, especially that which is worked through the Kuilëondo (E.g., The White Face may be ineffective against someone wearing the Karma.). Finally, the wearer of the Karma may grant its user the power to exorcise the cats from the bodies of those whom they infest. Although it will not instantly cancel the corrupting effect of their presence, it may enable healing or reversal to occur over time.

Epilogue

As stated in the introduction, this is not an adventure but a campaign of some magnitude. Consequently, the description of the encounters is rather uneven, with some given greater detail and attention than others. This is partly, as we said, a consideration of space; but a great deal of material pertinent to this campaign will be published in the *Kin-strife* module (particularly as regards NPC backgrounds, motives, and statistics). A few details of background and setting may be at variance with what appears in the published module, but they may be easily rectified should the GM wish to link the present plot to that module.





OtherHands Adventure/Supplement